



LEGEND OF THE SUPREME SOLDIER

BOOK 02

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Legend of the Supreme Soldier

(师士传说)

by

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(方想)

Synopsis

Ye Chong was a denizen of Trash Planet-12. On one fateful day, he discovered a treasure that would forever alter his destiny from a pile of junk – Mu Shang, an unknown machine with artificial intelligence and a lost memory. Together, they venture into the vast galaxy as the isolated “caveman” that was Ye Chong began absorbing all sorts of knowledge and meeting people from all walks of life. He gradually discovers more and more about his own mysterious past as well as his partner’s. Read to find out more!

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 101: Tour

"What is it?" Ye Chong was alerted.

"Someone sent out an encrypted message, and I've intercepted it!" Ye Chong knew from the tone of voice that it was not Mu, but Shang! Mu would never speak in such a carefree manner, as his tone was always flat and calm. Ye Chong was deeply influenced by Mu in this respect.

"Shang, is it your turn to come out now?" Ye Chong said, by way of greeting Shang.

Shang laughed, pleased. "I didn't expect such fun just when I came out! Ye, tsk tsk, don't be like Mu, you gotta have some fun in life! Hehe, that missy in the training garb is quite a lady, what powerful legs! I sure miss her! Tsk tsk! Ye, you're still alright down there right? I remember her kicking you there! Let's talk about your feelings back then. That was such a wasted opportunity!"

Rui Bing's figure, clad in white training garb came unbidden to Ye Chong's mind. He could not help but recall the strange fragrance and smooth touch from deep within his mind.

What a strange feeling!

Ye Chong knew that if he did not cut off the bastard right now, he would continue on forever with the topic. Hence, Ye Chong quickly interrupted, "Shang, you said that someone just sent out a message?"

Shang replied, "Mm, to be precise, someone had set a timed algorithm, such that a message would be sent out periodically to a specified destination!"

"Oh, what's it say?"

"The ship's current location!" Shang replied.

"Will this affect us?" Ye Chong asked.

"Information is insufficient, the results are incalculable. Sigh, Mu's slogan tastes horrible in my mouth!" Shang muttered, and continued flashily, "Ye, this must be the work of someone with ill designs towards this ship! Heavens, do you not have any sense of knightliness in you? Based on this year's online survey, this is one of the most appreciated qualities by the ladies in their dream partner! Ye ..."

Against Shang's chattering, Ye Chong became vexed. His expression turned loose, and he felt like he would faint at any moment!

After a full twenty minutes, Shang finally ended his grand speech on the topic.

Ye Chong was already withering, a body without a soul!

Shang spoke expectantly, "Ye, what do you think? Let's expose the impostor in the name of justice! Haha!"

"No!" Ye Chong resolutely ignored the crazy mech and left.

He soaked quietly in a jacuzzi, complete with rotating micro-jets. The numerous little whirlpools caressed every corner of his body, and the slight tickling sensation was wonderfully comfortable. However, Ye Chong's expression was not one of indulgence, but of one lost in thought.

Mu was absent, and Shang did not make him feel safe at all! When he was with Mu, the mech was like an invincible leader. When with Shang, Ye Chong found himself being the leader instead. However, the thought of Shang brought a smile to his face. Shang was discretely in control of the starship's photon processor, monitoring everyone on board! Regarding Brent and his uncle, Fred, Ye Chong dared not underestimate them. It was safer to be in control of his own destiny than letting others decide it for him, and also less worrisome for him! While they seemed close to each other, who was to say what the future holds? It was better to play it safe!

Ye Chong was also perturbed by Shang's report of the outgoing message. While he did not understand what it was about, Ye Chong thought nothing would come of it. It was best if he did not expose himself at the moment. Besides, close to Blue Ocean as they were now, any complications would spell trouble!

With his eyes half closed, Ye Chong sprawled lazily in the jacuzzi. "Now that feels much better!" Ye Chong's skin was extra sensitive. The little micro-whirlpools felt like animals moving in the water. Ye Chong was suddenly overcome by a playful mood. He closed his eyes and submerged his hands completely in the water, trying hard to feel the subtle motions of the water around his hands. His hands moved swiftly like fishes, avoiding the chaotic whirlpools in the water. When a whirlpool became unavoidable, he would disrupt the whirlpool with the tip of a finger. However, this introduced more irregularity into the water flow in the jacuzzi, making them harder to anticipate.

Alone in the micro-jets jacuzzi, Ye Chong thoroughly enjoyed himself.

Water in the micro-jet jacuzzi were mixed in with many rejuvenating ingredients that could reduce fatigue. Ye Chong now felt refreshed, as though he had lost some weight! However, if Ye Chong knew the amount of gold zuan charged for his bathing session could easily afford him a mech, what would his thoughts be then?

Only a Slan graded luxurious starship would have something like the micro-jet jacuzzi as a standard facility! For those who could afford the starship, how would they mind the relatively insignificant expenses involved?

Refreshed from his session, Ye Chong left the bathing room only to meet Brent. Brent reached for his arm and said smilingly, "Kun Ting, I've been looking all over for you, so this is where you've been hiding!"

Ye Chong reflexively shifted his posture, and Brent missed his arm. He was surprised, and laughed a little in the ensuing awkwardness.

Ye Chong asked plainly, "What's the matter?"

Seeing Ye Chong's apathetic and calm expression, Brent could not help but sighed inside as he continued with a smile, "I've been staying in my room these few days, and it's been a bore. Uncle was really obsessive about that mech of yours, I've never seen him so impressed with a mech like that! I don't think he'll pay much attention to us now, so I thought I'd bring you on a tour of this ship. Honestly, there are places here that even I haven't been to before! Why not take this opportunity to explore the ship together!"

Ye Chong pondered over the suggestion, thinking that it would be a good chance to familiarize himself with the ship. Even though Shang already knew its every corner, it would be better if he knew the ship's layouts too. With that, Ye Chong agreed to the tour.

Since most of the ship's crew were new, and the ship was a gift from someone else, Brent was not too familiar with the ship. Brent had high hopes for Ye Chong, a potential student of his. He had the idea that this future student of his must have been deprived of human interaction to behave so coldly towards other people.

Hence, he came with this idea.

Together with them was Captain Hatik, as he would of course oblige his master's requests. Hatik was still professional in this respect!

The starship Sabre was a ten kilometers long, looking very much like an island. It was a luxury starship model, and so boasted full range facilities with much extravagance! During his introductions, Captain Hatik was felt swept away by the starship. He had served as captain for many years, and been in command of a great many starships. However, a ship like Sabre was a first for him.

The three men entered a wide hall, filled with dozens of game rooms and a bar counter in the far off corner. There were many chairs and tables in the hall, most of them made of wood, and the elegant motives on them were carved by hand. This made the furniture look like works of art instead of a furniture of resting oneself.

Moreover, every corner of the hall was equipped with holographic screens at various angles.

The wide hall was filled to the brim and very noisy. The seats were all taken, and some were even standing. People drank and conversed, or sang loudly without a care in the world, or walking around the hall. However, most of them stared at the holographic screens unblinkingly!

Ye Chong frowned slightly, bothered by the noise. His expression did not slip past Brent, who smiled a little, apparently impressed with the hall.

Captain Hatik began, "This is the entertainment hall, undoubtedly the most luxurious I've ever seen. When they're otherwise unoccupied, folks like to spend their time here. The drinks are free-flowing, and free of charge. For those who drink like the fish but without the money to support their enjoyment, this place is heaven!"

"Luxury gaming booths are rare, and now that they can get a taste of it themselves, the idle folks here are helplessly enticed! The gaming booths are occupied every day, since everyone wants to try them out. Hehe, fortunately, there have been no accidents here throughout the trip, or I would have to invoke my rights as Captain to shut the place down, for fear of the situation getting out of hand!"

Ye Chong lifted his head to watch one of the holographic screens in mid air. A red mech was right in a battle against a green mech. Ye Chong whistled softly, obviously surprised by the content of the

game. The two mechs on the holographic screens were well rendered, the red mech was a cunning match against the steady green opponent. With his rich experience, Ye Chong could now identify the likely winner with just a glance. While the two mechs were seemingly tied in battle, Ye Chong noticed that the green mech still had some potential in it. If the red mech did not have any killer moves, then the green mech would most probably emerge as the winner.

Captain Hatik noticed Ye Chong's interest in the battle on the holographic screen, and introduced, "Fred the Great is a man of high status, and his safety is important. This time, our hired bodyguards are mostly well known in the field, all of them fully capable! Here on the screen, the green mech is Yu Jie, and the red mech is Douglas. They both enjoy prestigious reputations, excelling in both mech piloting and bodyguard services. Amongst all the bodyguards, many of them are on the same level of these two! However, hehe, the real masters usually do not show themselves easily." Captain Hatik spoke with an eloquent undertone.

As the captain finished, the battle was also over. As Ye Chong expected, the green mech, or Yu Jie, claimed victory. The spectators below roared in dissatisfaction, but some of them were also laughing loudly, pleased with themselves. Their investment in the outcome of the battle surprised Ye Chong.

Brent was also baffled, as the sight was a first for him too. He looked to Captain Hatik for an explanation.

Captain Hatik looked a little embarrassed, but obligingly explained, "It is customary for the battling opponents to bet for themselves, and the spectators will usually bet for their favored ones. The winner will not only gain all the bet money for his opponent, he'll also take a cut of ten percent from the winnings of all the spectators who bet for him. That is the custom!"

Seeing Brent's disapproval, Captain Hatik shrugged a little.

"While this is a form of gambling, it's actually a good way to amuse people like ourselves, who spent much time floating around in space! It's also a way to de-stress ourselves!"

Brent replied with an "Oh," indicating his understanding. Ye Chong's expression did not change, as he was not focused on the conversation, but meticulously going through every corner of the hall. It was second nature for Ye Chong to familiarize himself with his surroundings at the first opportunity.

The three made their way to the bar counter. As they passed by, people greeted Captain Hatik warmly, and Captain Hatik returned the gesture with equal enthusiasm. One can thus see that these people sincerely respect Captain Hatik. That fact made Ye Chong and Brent think twice on their thoughts about the Captain.

"Hi! Boss! What brings you all the way here?" The chubby bartender greeted Captain Hatik.

The captain laughed. "I'm just bringing these two gentlemen for a walk. You, Sir, are the person standing nearest to the alcohol!" He turned to the two and introduced. "This fat chump here is Gino, drinks like a fish, but mixes drinks like a master. What'd you like to have? Just name the order! The man claims to know every drink known to the world! Haha, Gino, give me a Fruit Basket!"

"Righto!" The chubby man cried in reply, and his hands began to move in a blur. After a moment, a yellowish white drink with some flowing patterns on it was presented to Captain Hatik. A strong and heavy smell, with a stinging quality to it, emanated from the cocktail.

Brent, with years of following Fred around, socializing with members of the upper class society, was also an expert in drinks. He ordered an Ignaz, and the chubby man could not help but notice Brent's peculiarity.

A green and violet cocktail, looking a little opaque, was brought to him. Brent sipped a little, and could not help but applaud,

"Excellent! A master indeed! The taste is authentic!" He even gave a thumbs-up to the bartender! The chubby man instantly brightened up, pleased with the compliment!

Ye Chong had no experience with drinks, and copied Brent's order. He took a little sip, just like Brent, and a weird taste exploded in his mouth. Ye Chong quickly put down the drink, and knitted his brows.

The chubby man's attitude towards Ye Chong was now tinged with disdain!

Brent finished his glass of Ignaz in one gulp, his expression one of great satisfaction and indulgence.

By then, two people had left their gaming booths. Brent smiled a little and nodded towards the booths, as he cocked his eyebrow and said, "Well, Kun Ting? Let's go for a round!"

Chapter 102: Game

Brent could not, for the life of him, figure out how Ye Chong managed to slip into Sabre without being noticed. Sabre was not a run-of-the-mill starship, and those who could afford this type of starships were not only extremely wealthy, but also very conscious of their own safety. Even an idiot would realize this. Slan-grade starships were all equipped with the most advanced technologies, and the unthinkable thick hull armor made it impossible to breach from the outside!

Despite the odds, Ye Chong still managed to enter the starship without being noticed. How could Brent not be curious, and even a little frightened of him? While no starship was impenetrable, an undetected entry into the ship brought a chill down his spine!

Brent was no fool, and he was vigilant against Kun Ting's unknown history. However, based on his current observations, the mysterious man before him probably did not belong to the group. In any case, offending a person he knew nothing about would be an irrational move. Besides, ever since Kun Ting slipped into the starship and won against him, he and Uncle Fred were no longer in control of their own destinies!

It would be suicidal to show any hostility at this point! Kun Ting's eyes shone cold as ice, preventing him from making any hasty decisions. No one knew what the future held!

Some time ago, a few good friends of Uncle Fred mysteriously disappeared, and were unheard of since then. The police did not uncover anything useful, and could only deduce from the way they vanished that it must be the work of a group. Fred's friends were all experts in mechs with their own specializations, and were famous in their respective fields. Now that they have disappeared one by one, how could they not be terrified?

Not long after that, Fred heard from somewhere that he was the

group's next target.

After receiving news that someone had ill designs for Uncle Fred, Brent and his uncle began planning for the current space cruise. From the beginning, they acted out of character and spread news of the cruise far and wide, making a big hoo-hah out of it, such that everyone knew about their plans. They exposed themselves to the public, hoping that their publicity will prevent any actions from the enemy. However, now that Kun Ting had taken over the ship, they had unexpectedly changed course, and all for the better. This sudden change must have surprised their enemy in the darkness.

As for the idea of introducing Ye Chong to his own master, that was a sudden thought that occurred to him. With his master's crazy character, he would probably not mind Ye Chong's past. His deliberate actions these few days had finally paid off. When he mentioned about introducing Kun Ting to his master, he saw an uncharacteristic flash of eagerness in Kun Ting's eyes, a contrast to his cool expression. Brent was pleased. With this, even if something happened in the future, Kun Ting would at least not side with his enemy.

A verbal promise in exchange for potential alliance - this was in all ways a worthwhile exchange. While it made Brent feel a little guilty, what would his feelings matter if it was for his Uncle Fred? Besides, if they survived this ordeal, he would introduce Kun Ting to his master, just as he promised.

Bren watched with mixed feelings as Kun Ting made his way towards another gaming booth, his expression unreadable.

Ever since he finished his apprenticeship, Brent had never lost to anyone before. His loss against Kun Ting was something he took to heart! However, real life combat was gradually fading, and the true forces that dominated the current landscape were mechs and their pilots!

Brent's challenge this time was in part to compare their

strengths, but mostly, he wanted to know more about the mysterious enigma that was Kun Ting. Brent rarely used mechs to battle against others, but did not mean that his skills were unremarkable. On the contrary, he was the student of a reputable teacher, though few knew about it. After all, his uncle was Fred the Great, and his friends include many legendary mech pilots.

As he caressed the hypersimulator console in the gaming booth, the usually gentlemanly and courteous Brent could not help but grow excited and exuberant!

Ye Chong calmly sat inside the gaming booth. After his long experience with mechs, he could now control his emotions better. After all, any hasty movements would often lead to death! However, a little excitement could make a mech pilot's reactions quicker.

A calmness lightly tinged with excitement was the best state of mind for a mech pilot to perform his or her best!

An important difference between amateur pilots and senior pilots was that the seniors could often enter this state very quickly!

It seemed that Ye Chong was born for mechs. Whenever he was dealing with mechs, he would subconsciously enter this state of mind, a state that made him obsessed with mechs!

The arena before him was very familiar. Ye Chong was reminded of his time back on the trash planet, accessing the virtual world and challenging others in the pilot training center every day.

The confusing array of mechs consisting different models kindled a warm feeling in Ye Chong. The mechs were not impressive to Ye Chong. Compared to the Harmony of the Winter Aria, these so-called top class mechs were nothing to boast about. However, even if they were not particularly powerful mechs, Ye Chong was still excited. A surge of desire for battle surfaced from the very depths of his heart!

"Hu ..." Ye Chong let out a long exhale, his eyes suddenly flared up like fire, even as his heart maintained his usual calm composure.

Ye Chong chose Lra as his mech. The Lra mech was the latest model launched by Pruist this year, and it was the only mech of its level by the company this year that was a close range mech. Its uniqueness lay in its powerful movement. Equipped with the year's new product, the Warhead-IV engine, the mech performed splendidly in terms of motion.

Its weapons were also specially designed. Instead of the standard Flaming Sword, the mech was given a blunt instrument. This may be confusing to most, but the design of the weapon was nothing short of spectacular. Three metal cylinders littered with tiny holes circled around the mech under the guidance of a magnetic field, rotating at high speeds. Upon entering the range of the magnetic field, the enemy would be instantly killed! Moreover, the mech's powerful photon processor could identify the object that entered its magnetic field range. The cylinders were also packed with another feature - once the kill command was verified, the tiny holes on the cylinder's surface would emit high powered laser beams. The seemingly harmless cylinders instantly turned into a lethal claw hammer. Under the deadly attacks of 3 such cylinders, the enemy's mech would not be able to avoid the fate of being cut into pieces.

Lra mechs were also special in that they were neither humanoid nor shaped like any animal. The mech was oval-ish, with sixteen rings circling about the mech's body. Besides, the sixteen rings did not share the same center of rotation. The rapidly circling rings orbited about the mech in a dense network of trajectories, enveloping the mech in a shroud of shadows. These rapidly orbiting rings could effectively absorb and block any attacks from energy based weapons.

In truth, Lra mechs were not actually close range mechs, but a

long range mech with a reduced attack range.

Lra also had a nickname - the Meat Grinder.

Brent chose outer space as the battleground, and used Stellar Dream as his mech, a product of the East Moon Group. Stellar Dream was a classic long range mech, popular due to the dominant trend of long range battle styles. Besides, its exterior was classy and elegant, favored by many mech pilots. Stellar Dream had clear contours along its profile, its expression solemn, looking mighty and out of this world. The silver-white colour of the mech shone brightly, adding to its touch of elegance.

Overly splendid things had always stirred caution and distaste in Ye Chong.

However, Stellar Dream was not all looks and no substance. Advanced shooting systems were a must for long rang mechs, and Stellar Dream's did well in auto shooting and lock-on targeting. Unlike other mechs, Stellar Dream offered a precision higher than that of the auto lock-on system's, achieved through manual lock-on. However, this depended heavily on the mech pilot's skills. On the other hand, Stellar Dream was also excellent in other aspects such as movement and balance.

In outer space, Stellar Dream held an advantage over Lra. More accurately speaking, long range mechs were more practical than short range mechs in outer space, since the former had a wider range of action. Brent was not deliberately bullying Ye Chong, but he did not expect Kun Ting to choose Lra. The choice greatly surprised him, and Kun Ting became more and more of a mystery to him. Brent had trained under an expert, and did not hold a condescending opinion on close range mechs. However, the choice of a close range mech in an environment as homogenous as outer space seemed like a foolish decision to him!

"But Kun Ting doesn't seem to be someone foolish," thought Brent, baffled.

Ye Chong also frowned a little as he noticed the outer space battleground. The environment was a huge disadvantage for the Lra, but he had raised no objections. He understood clearly that in most cases, the battleground was not for him to decide. Instead of blaming the unfairness of the battleground to him, his time was better spent on strategizing!

A distance away, separated by the transparent walls of the gaming booth, Brent noticed Kun Ting's calm expression and muttered to himself, "Does he have a plan, or does he not care about the battle outcome?"

The game was about to start, and Brent quickly gathered his thoughts and put on his helmet.

Once in the game, Brent's Stellar Dream raised its arm and fired once, but Ye Chong was already prepared and evaded the attack easily. Brent was not aiming to hit his opponent. Instead, he used the opportunity to widen the distance between him and Kun Ting. With the wider distance, he believed that he could secure victory with his shooting skills. With this, Brent was confident.

Without any suspense, Brent achieved his goal and managed to widen the distance between him and Kun Ting!

Brent instantly felt himself calming down. He went through a few scenarios in his head, but could not imagine how Kun Ting could turn things around.

Ye Chong, however, was now moving in a way that was beyond all of Brent's expectations!

Chapter 103: Old Pang

Close range mechs were only effective in close quarters due to their short ranged attacks. A close range mech must first close in on their enemy such that the enemy was within their attack range, so that their weapons could be effectively used. If not, the mech will only serve as target practice for its opponent!

Hence, the first step in a close range mech's strategy was to desperately approach the enemy, closing the distance between itself and its opponent.

However, Ye Chong did the exact opposite. After he evaded Brent's attack, he immediately ran away. Brent was left behind, stupefied, as watched Ye Chong become smaller and smaller in the distance, quickly becoming only a tiny black dot.

"Escaping without attacking?" Brent thought, stunned. "Does he not care about being laughed at? It's only a game! Kun Ting doesn't look like a coward!"

Ye Chong's escape ignited a commotion amongst the spectators of their game in the hall. They booed at his apparent cowardice, and while it was not a loud protest, their reaction attracted the attention of the people viewing other games in the hall. Everyone could not help but shift their attention to the holographic screen featuring the battle between Ye Chong and Brent.

Ye Chong was focusing on controlling his mech in the gaming booth, undistracted!

For Ye Chong, this was a battle! Not a game! If it was a battle, Ye Chong will give it his all! A battle was a matter of life and death! There was no room for doubt!

From Brent's attack with his gun, he knew that his opponent was an excellent shooter. If Ye Chong was not prepared in the short span of time, , the attack would have definitely hit him!

The time that it would take him to close in on Brent was enough for his enemy to take another 3 shots. With Brent's skills, he would not even need all 3 shots to finish him off!

If that was the case, then widening the distance between him and his enemy would be a wise choice.

Ye Chong did not feel that his escape was something to be ashamed of. He did not take any damage, and that meant he still stood a chance of winning against his opponent! When the situation was mostly to his opponent's advantage, choosing to battle would be foolish indeed! Unless he was desperate, it was still best to battle only when the environment was in his favor. This was Ye Chong's insight after his countless battle experiences!

Ye Chong maneuvered his mech and flew swiftly ahead. He enlarged the mech's scanning radius, and found nothing! After further enlargement, there was still nothing! Another enlargement, and still, there was nothing! Ye Chong was not dispirited. He continued increasing the scanning radius. This repetitive task was not new to him! Finally, when the scanning radius was at its maximum, he found a large asteroid belt at 9 degrees from the radius vector. It was quite far, and would take around 12 hours to reach there by flight.

With a larger scanning radius, the scanning accuracy will drop. More energy would be exhausted, and the time taken for a full scanning cycle would also increase. Hence, one would rarely increase the scanning radius to an unnecessarily large range, due to its risky nature!

Brent was far behind Ye Chong. After being stunned for a moment, the distance between them had increased. With the long distance between them, shooting accuracy would be affected. Brent tried shooting a few times, and could not hit his target. He ceased fire, saving his energy.

"What is Kun Ting trying to do?" Brent thought in his confusion.

"There's nothing ahead. If he just flew ahead like that, it would be just a waste of time!" Brent increased his scanning radius and found nothing ahead!

Kun Ting showed no signs of stopping, still flying straight ahead.

Brent was feeling more uncertain. During his days with Kun Ting, he did not seem like a person who would do something in vain! "There must be something ahead," thought Brent, as he further increased his scanning radius. However, the results still showed nothing!

With his current scanning radius, Brent estimated with Kun Ting's speed of flight that he would need at least 5 hours to reach the edges of his scan!

"Could there be something even further away?" Bren shook his head. Would anyone be foolish enough to spend more than 5 hours to win in something as trivial as a game?

"Impossible!" Brent dismissed the idea! "Would anyone be so foolish?" The thought made Brent shake his head and laugh a little. The thought was too ridiculous!

The spectators shook their heads and left, leaving only a few behind to watch the game.

A burly man with a red face and bushy eyebrows was frowning hard, confused by what he was seeing. He could not help but asked softly, "Big bro, what's the boy's tricks, you think? I don't understand him at all, but there's something wrong here! He looks like he's running away, but he's not exactly speeding away. He may have some tricks up his sleeves, but there's nothing ahead of him. Besides, this battleground is not good for the Meat Grinder. Unless his opponent made a blunder, I don't see any way out of his situation! Though, the guy back there sure shoots well, I don't think he's going to miss much!"

Standing by his side was a bearded, middle-aged man. His eyes

glowed a little at the comment, but he replied solemnly, "You're wrong, second little bro! Hmm hmm, the guy in front is the one you should look out for! Guy's determined, must be a ruthless character! As for the guy at the back, he may shoot just fine, but it's obvious that he's never been in a real battle in his life!" He spoke the last sentence with faint but clear condescension!

Redface was surprised, as he had never heard his big brother praise someone so highly. If he did not already know that his big brother would never speak lightly, he would have thought that the man was sick in the head! He asked carefully, "Big bro, you say he's determined, but I don't see how! He's just flying straight ahead! It's all in vain!"

Beardman laughed, his glistening white teeth showing, with an expression of reminiscence. "If not for my experience with this battleground, I'd have thought the same as you! There's this one time, with another guy, we fought for twenty rounds straight, and the results were tied! And so, we decided that the next game would decide the winner!" Beardman wore a relaxed expression, cherishing his past. On his side, Redface looked eager, learning that someone could battle against his big brother for twenty rounds straight and ending with a tie! That person must be very capable!

"What happened in the twenty first round is like this - he suddenly chose a close range mech, hehe, just like the young man here, and immediately ran off at the start! I didn't think much of it back then, and chased after him! Hehe, it took twelve hours, the chasing, and I was young and all, only thinking of winning! I didn't expect to be chasing for so long, and after 7 hours of chasing, I finally figured out the b*stard's goal! I always thought that my mech's scanning radius was large enough, but that b*stard did me one better! From our initial positions, there's a huge asteroid belt at 9 degrees from the radius vector. However, hehe, it'll take a full twelve-hours to reach it!"

Redface gasped in astonishment, the answer clearly not what he expected! He could not imagine two people chasing around for twelve hours to battle in a game!

"Anyway, I lost that match! But I lost fair and square! You must have heard of him, he's called the Son of Light!" Beardman continued lightly.

"Son of Light? That legendary Son of Light?" This was obviously surprising for Redface. He looked shocked, mouth gaping wide!

Beardman did not explain any further, but watched with interest at Ye Chong on the holographic screen. "Hehe, who'd have thought I'd meet a guy like this again! If that b*stard Son of Light is still here, he would have found a kindred spirit!" He bowed his head, deep in thought.

"These - these men, are they all crazy?" thought Redface, astonished. "Chasing around for twelve hours in a game? I didn't think someone as calm as big bro would have done that!"

Beardman pondered for a long moment before lifting his head again. He looked eloquently at the holographic screen, showing a Lra mech, still flying straight ahead.

Beardman thought for a moment, and warned, "Second little bro, our job this time is to return Fred the Great's favor. Beyond that, it's not for us to interfere. We only need to keep a discreet eye on this guy!"

"Keep an eye on him? Isn't he with Brent? He should be fine!" Redface was baffled.

Seeing his baffled expression, Beardman sighed a little inside, but still tried to explain, "You have to look at the eyes to know someone. You may not have noticed, but when Brent and the guy arrived just now, I saw that they were still on guard against each other. Hehe, they're still too young! Can't hide their thoughts! Besides, though they may walk side by side, they still keep a

curious distance between them. Also, if I remember correctly, the guy was not on this ship in the beginning!" While his words were speculative, his tone was decisive, and his eyes shone brightly.

Redface was surprised. "You mean he infiltrated midway? That's impossible! You can't just infiltrate Sabre like nobody's business!"

Beardman shook his head. "I'm not sure about that, however, we just have to keep an eye on him! Hehe, the ship's full of complicated characters, and anything can happen. We just have to do our best!"

"Alright!" Redface nodded, not entirely understanding.

"Ah, Ke Sang, Old Pang, you're still watching it? Those two fellows sure are boring, running around for who knows what?" A pugnacious looking man approached the two, a drink in his hand.

Beardman, or Old Pang, gave a little smile. "It's not like we have anything else to do. You must be here to ask Ka Sang for a drink! Ka Sang, go have fun with Leopard and the other men, shake off some boredom!" He hinted with his eyes at Redface.

Ka Sang acknowledged, not entirely sure of himself.

Leopard instantly brightened up, and rubbed his hands together in excitement. "Yea, that's right, it's just dull sitting around here! Old Pang, wanna have some fun?"

Old Pang smiled reservedly and declined. "I'd better not go, I'm not as much of a drinker like you all. Ka Sang will join you!"

Leopard did not insist, and dragged a confused Ka Sang along with him towards the bar counter.

Brent was growing restless. It had been more than half an hour, but Kun Ting was showing no signs of stopping. What was he trying to achieve?

Brent tried to suppress his agitation and forced himself to continue on.

Just when Brent was starting to feel impatient, his vision suddenly turned black. He felt the gaming booth automatically open, and before he could remove his helmet, he heard the mad shrieking of the alarm that was blaring deafeningly!

Somehow, although Brent's immediate reaction was shock, his next reaction was one of relief!

Chapter 104: Enter the Warship

Ye Chong came out of the gaming booth, and found that Brent was the only other person left in the hall. Brent was staring fixedly at the holographic screen, not even noticing when Ye Chong came to his side.

The holographic screen showed the image of a white starship ahead of them. The white starship looked like two pure white crescents crossing each other, elegant and exquisite. Ye Chong knew almost nothing about starships, but felt that the design looked familiar, as though he had seen it before, but could not recall when.

It was like a massive, elegant beast, approaching their starship with apparent ease.

Everyone held their breaths, staring unblinkingly at the holographic screen.

Suddenly, something changed with the white starship on the holographic screen. Dozens of armour plates slid open, revealing numerous dark cavities. Just when everyone was confused, long cylinders extended from those cavities, a threatening sight!

"Laser cannons? A warship?" Brent, who always looked calm, now had a twisted expression! "How is this possible? A warship? Haven't the Five Galaxies forbidden their manufacturing? How can anyone still make warships?" Brent was getting repetitive.

On the other hand, Ye Chong was watching Brent in confusion, thinking, "Are they really that scary?"

Captain Hatik's commands reverberated throughout the entire starship. His voice was hoarse and low, unlike when he was with Ye Chong and Brent earlier. "Attention to all crew members! Attention to all crew members! All hands on deck! All hands on deck! Combatants, prepare for battle! Combatants, prepare for

battle!"

The entire bridge was swarming with activity. While the threat before them was unprecedented, they were all experienced crew members and did not panic, but did their duties in an orderly manner.

"Captain, the enemy's deployed interference measures. Our signals are severely disrupted, we can't request for assistance from nearby planets!" The officer in charge of communications reported.

Captain Hatik wore a heavy expression. He was troubled by the report, but commanded in his deep voice, "Keep at it, don't stop trying!"

"Yes sir!"

"Quick! Come with me!" Brent ran ahead without explaining further!

Ye Chong responded quickly as he was told, and trailed behind Brent.

The two went straight to the room where Fred was. The man was staring at the white warship on his holographic screen, muttering to himself, "Ah, the world's heading towards chaos again!"

Brent noticed Shang, standing by the side, and saw the mech's missing arm. He frowned and asked, "Do you have a functioning mech?"

Ye Chong thought it over. Harmony of the Winter Aria was heavily damaged, and probably could do nothing in a battle. That left him with the F-58, but the F-58 was only a training mech, unfit for combat. Ye Chong shook his head reluctantly, "No!"

Brent grabbed hold of his Uncle Fred, who was still in a daze. "Uncle, do we still have any functioning mechs?"

Fred seemed to recover himself then. "Oh, we do, we do!" He

went to a corner and groped about for a moment, and Swish, a door opened where the wall once was. After a round of identity authentication, the three entered the secret room.

Ye Chong was surprised, learning that the secret room had evaded even Mu's scans. It was truly incredible!

The secret room was not large, storing about 8 mechs in it, all unknown to Ye Chong. Their colours intertwined, and the twinkling metallic lustre made the room like a tiny, mesmerising world of metallic mechs.

Fred pointed towards the mechs and said, "These are all my proud creations, pick one!" He knew that in their desperate situation, if he was captured, these mechs would no longer be his. It would be better to use the mechs to bolster firepower, and increase his chances of survival.

Ye Chong may have seen his fair share of mechs, but these were all uniquely designed and confusing to him. For the moment, he was at a loss as to pick which one!

Brent noticed Ye Chong's quandary and asked, "What's your preferred type of mech? Close or long range?"

Ye Chong replied without hesitation, "Close range!"

Brent looked to Uncle Fred, who continued quickly, "This is the only close range mech!" He pointed towards a black, menacing mech. "Its design is inspired by an ancient totem from a remote tribal village! Its original form is one of the Gods of the tribe ..."

The mech was undoubtedly the most attractive of all the other mechs. While it was not the most exquisite, its height was nearly twice that of any common mech, towering over the others. The design was also odd - 2 faces and 4 hands, where each hand held a weapon or a shield; one face was smiling pleasantly, another was staring furiously, full of intimidation! The joints, such as the elbows and knees, were wrapped with old-style armour plates,

covered with barbs.

"A God? This is no God, this is a murder weapon in the mortal world!" This was Ye Chong's first impression of it, but that was also how he came to like the mech.

Ye Chong did not waste time listening to Fred's long winded explanation. He asked, "Where's the dimension keystone?"

Fred hit his own head and exclaimed, "Oh, how could I have forgotten about that, let me find it!" He began rummaging about the room. Brent could only look on helplessly, unsure if he should laugh or cry out loud.

Ye Chong did not mind them. He climbed onto the mech with bare hands like a mutant monkey, and slipped into the pilot's cabin. He put on the battle helmet and began to configure the initial settings.

Brent waited anxiously as Ye Chong did the initial configurations.

Suddenly, a dull thump was heard, and the entire starship shook slightly! Brent's expression twisted! The enemy had fired their cannons! Fred paled as well, but he maintained his calm composure and recovered from the shock, continuing his search for the mech's dimension keystone.

Ye Chong was fully focused, undistracted by anything around him!

Captain Hatik's hoarse voice was trembling faintly as he announced, "Fleet One combatants, attack!"

Brent could not wait for Ye Chong any further. He quickly switched on the secret room's holographic screen, and Fred, who had just found the keystone, was also diverted to the holographic display.

About a hundred mechs flew towards the white warship, a black swarm, like hornets leaving their nest. The mech pilots personally

chosen by Captain Hatik's were all experienced combatants. Their formation and defense was solid.

The enemy seemed to realize the swarm, and directed some of the cannons towards it.

Ye Chong was finished with the initial configurations. He slipped out of the mech and asked Fred, "Have you found the keystone?"

Fred shifted his attention from the holographic screen to him, and handed over the dimension keystone to Ye Chong. "Here, this is it. Don't forget, the mech's name is [Yu Di](#), which is also the name of the God! It's yours now, take care of it!" Fred spoke like a father placing his son in another's care, and he looked a little saddened.

"Yes!" Ye Chong nodded resolutely, and took Yu Di's dimension keystone from Fred.

"Are there backup energy cells?" Ye Chong asked.

"Oh, there!" Fred pointed towards a corner, thinking nothing of it. Ye Chong swiftly made for the energy cells and moved them into Yu Di. Energy cells were the driving force of all mechs, it would do no harm to have a few as backup!

Ye Chong moved the energy cells until he deemed them enough, and withdrew Yu Di into its alternate dimension.

The starship was occasionally shaking, Sabre's massive hull unable to evade any of the enemy's cannon attacks. Fortunately, its armor was as thick as the ship was massive, and its armor would not falter in the short term. However, if the situation continued, destruction was only a matter of time.

The warship's cannon attacks were not effective against the quick movements of the mechs, much like shooting mosquitoes with cannon balls. The warship's weapons were designed to increase their firepower and maximize damage on starships, but this required some compromise on the weapons' flexibility and

accuracy, making them less effective against mechs.

However, the heavy round of cannonfire earlier still resulted in the loss of quite a few mechs. The mechs that were hit ended tragically. Most of them were vapourized instantly, and even those that were only slightly grazed exploded almost instantly. The pilots in the mechs stood no chance of surviving the attacks.

Brent's face was white as paper, witnessing a spectacle as cruel as it was for the very first time. Ye Chong, however, kept his cool demeanor, his expression unchanged, for the sight was not as impressive to him!

The enemy seemed to realize then that cannon fire was ineffective against the mechs!

The best weapon against mechs would be mechs! This was a widely circulated saying amongst mech pilots.

About thirty to forty white mechs flew out from the enemy's warship. Seeing the obvious advantage in numbers on his own side, Brent could not help but exhale in relief!

However, when Ye Chong could see the mechs more clearly, his calm composure was disrupted, and Ye Chong's expression twisted!

The MPA!

These white mechs were all the same model as the one that Johansson attacked that day. While he did not know its name, Ye Chong was certain that he did not remember it wrong! During his time on Blue Ocean, he was attacked a few times by the white mech for no apparent reason.

It was no wonder that Ye Chong felt that the white warship looked familiar. The ship's design was very similar to the strange looking gun that the white mechs held in their hands!

These people will not stand a chance! While the enemy was severely outnumbered, Ye Chong knew from the white mech's

strength that their smaller squad had terrifying potential!

Ye Chong spoke without explaining his thought, "Come, let's back them up!"

Brent paused. "Do they still need backing up? We're twice in numbers!"

Ye Chong ignored him, and mentally reached for Shang, "We're backing them up!"

"I agree with your decision!" From his light tone, Ye Chong knew immediately that it was Mu!

Ye Chong was overjoyed. "Mu, it's you! I was expecting Shang!"

Mu explained calmly, "The threat level is too high. For safety reasons, Shang had asked for me!"

"Hmm, it's good to have you!" Ye Chong felt himself feeling calmer, and immediately rushed for the flight runways.

That was how Fred and Brent witnessed the extraordinary moment where the one-armed mech, inert since a few days ago, moved and trailed behind Ye Chong, following him closely.

Fred, who had been studying the mech for the past few days, could only look on in astonishment!

Yu Di: Translated from 鱼的, the name of the mech given to Ye Chong by Fred.

Chapter 105: The Insidious Yu Di

Ye Chong and Mu did not meet anyone idling around along the way. Everyone stood at their appointed stations dutifully. All non-combatants were sent to the safe room to avoid harm.

There were many flight runways available on Sabre, and that was convenient for Ye Chong.

As the mechs from both sides engaged, Sabre's mechs immediately took heavy damage. The enemy's mechs Nanowaves fired from their flexible ivory-white Javelin Angel-Vs, coupled with an impressive auto lock-on system that even Black Cove mechs found difficult to evade unleashed its full destructive powers on the enemy. The forty two Messengers all fired once, and forty mechs from the other side perished as a result, leaving only two mechs that escaped their assault.

Such terrifying aim and powerful guns caused instant turmoil amongst the mechs from Sabre.

At the bridge onboard Sabre, everyone stared in shocked, their faces paled as though the world was ending before their eyes. Captain Hatik's pained expression was twisted horribly, but he quickly gave the order in his hoarse voice. "Squads Two, Three and Four combatants, initiate attack!"

If they ceased to attack now, the remaining mechs would quickly be overwhelmed. Captain Hatik could only hope to use their numbers to his advantage, and so he put all his hopes on this last gamble!

Everyone onboard the ship understood their fates. When the enemy used a warship against them, it implied that they had no intention of leaving anyone alive. If news of their warship was leaked, the enemy would have to face the united forces of the Five Galaxies. No matter how powerful the enemy was, the result was definitely fatal. Surely the enemy would think the same!

Captain Hatik turned to his communications officer and asked, "Well? Any signals yet?"

The officer was on the verge of crying, looking hopeless. "None! Captain, I believe we're done for!"

Captain Hatik felt his chest tighten, but he maintained his calm expression and patted the officer on the back and said determinedly, "Don't give up, continue reaching out! We will prevail! Don't worry! I will bring you all home!"

The officer pulled himself together and nodded clearly, "Yes! Captain!" and continued on with his work, repeating his efforts of trying to communicate with the outside world.

Captain Hatik, however, was feeling a little dismal! Can one truly control one's own fate?

Ye Chong had just exited the flight runway when Captain Hatik gave the order for the supporting forces!

The first squad of combatants knew that they were no match for the opponent, and could only desperately buy time for support. Hence, an array of impressive evading skills were continuously employed in the small battlefield, and the battle was turned into a mass demonstration of evasion tricks!

However, the results were apparent, as the rate of mechs lost was reducing quickly.

The sight of three hundred over mechs launching together was an incredible sight! Even the ever steadfast Ye Chong could not help but feel a rush of excitement! Yu Di and Mu flew amongst the three hundred over mechs, inconspicuous to the ignorant!

However, this was obviously not the time for Ye Chong to be overexcited. He must familiarize himself with Yu Di, a gift from Fred, before he entered the range of the enemy's attacks!

Yu Di's every component was designed and made by Fred the Great himself, most of them very different from the component

models found commonly in the market. Fortunately, Ye Chong was knowledgeable in mech modifications, and even if he did not know the exact models used, a few trials and errors was enough for him to have a rough understanding of the mech!

The mech's engines were definitely top of the line. Sitting in the mech, Ye Chong could feel the powerful surge from the mech's engines, surpassing even the capabilities of Harmony of the Winter Aria. "As expected of a master," thought Ye Chong respectfully. One should understand that the most difficult component to modify in a mech was its engines, since technology in engine designs were already mature. To modify even a small part of an engine was an incredible feat, much less redesigning an entirely new model! Besides, this engine model performed wonderfully!

Yu Di's most eye-catching feature was definitely its four hands. These four mechanical hands were well designed, with a range of motion that surprised even Ye Chong. The hands moved like the tentacles of an octopus, and even the weapons equipped for them were thoughtful.

One hand held a shield, and without any experience with it, Ye Chong did not know its capabilities, as he dared not attempt to test it in the current battle. Another hand clutched a spear, its head made of laser beams. The laser spearhead could even be launched as a weapon, but as for its effectiveness, Ye Chong was equally ignorant.

The weapon held by the third hand was one that Ye Chong was familiar with - a UF magnetic sword. This was one of Ye Chong's favourite weapons, and this particular sword's vibrating frequency was three times higher than the top grade UF magnetic swords found in the market. "Heavens, how did he solve the vibration frequency threshold problem? That's a world-class problem!" thought Ye Chong.

The weapon on the fourth and final hand was a bit odd. It was a vase shaped ammunitions launcher. "The old fool, did he really

think this is a God?" The thought of the vase shaped design made Ye Chong want to cry, or laugh, or both. However, once he examined the contents of the launcher, Ye Chong felt a chill run down his spine! Electro-interference grenades, high compression explosive grenades, metal degradation agents ... All sorts of insidious auxiliary grenades were found, and in great variety. Ye Chong even found a small gravity grenade. "The man can fit a gravity matrix into such a small grenade! How terrifying!" Ye Chong finally understood that the mech was no God, but an honest-to-God devil of extreme insidiousness! Perhaps the trump card of this mech lay in these weapons!

"What a crafty old man!"

However, Ye Chong was not extremely gratified by the old man, Fred. These weapons, if used appropriately, would have devastating power! That meant that Ye Chong's chances of survival had increased!

Without time for further contemplation, Mu reminded Ye Chong that he was close to the enemy's firing range. Ye Chong immediately gathered his thoughts and examined the situation before him carefully. If he took a hit, even Mu with all his ingenuity could not save him! Fortunately, his hands moved quickly enough to make up for his unfamiliarity with Yu Di.

The MPA warship's commander was obviously confident of the forty two Messengers, and did not direct any of the warship's cannons to provide support. Instead, the cannons continued to fired at Sabre at a steady pace, hoping to breach the starship's seemingly impregnable armor!

Since Ye Chong was still adjusting himself to Yu Di, he was no longer in the middle of the swarm of mechs, but had dropped behind, with Mu flying steadily by his side.

However, with this, he would only need to concentrate on avoiding any stray bullets. He was not foolish enough to rush to

the front lines!

Over three hundred mechs of all colours surrounded the forty two Messengers and fired their long range weapons, the canopy of laser beams and heat rays formed a dazzling web of light. No matter how powerful the Messengers were, they could not overcome the force of so many others! The forty two Messengers took their first hit, five of them destroyed by the first round of attacks, and a few of them were damaged!

The pilots were encouraged, as the white mechs image of invincibility was finally shattered!

The remaining Messengers did not stay put, but whizzed away in all directions, flying into the swarm of mechs. The pilots ceased fire for fear of shooting their comrades but the Messengers did not share the same concern; almost everyone around them were their enemies, and they could fire as they please! However, they also lost their long range advantage earlier. However, while their numbers were decreasing, the enemy's numbers were also decreasing, but at a much higher rate, tenfold or more!

Ye Chong carefully avoided the stray bullets. He did fully understand Yu Di's armor and defense capabilities, and this was not the place to experiment on them.

Some distance away, a Messenger was pursued by a few mechs, and was now heading towards him.

Ye Chong laughed coldly inside, his hands moving across the controls in a blur, initiating a sequence of maneuvers. Yu Di lifted its vase-shaped grenade launcher, and a gravity grenade was launched towards the Messenger.

Ye Chong noticed then that his scanning system did not register any trace of the gravity grenade. "Was the grenade shell made of anti-detection material? It must be so! What a sly old man!" Ye Chong was sincerely impressed!

The Messenger was obviously faster than the mechs pursuing it. With just a few minor evasive motions, it could avoid the laser beam attacks from behind.

The pilot of this Messenger also noticed an oddly designed mech some distance away, floating around idly. "What a fool, to space off on the battleground, just asking for trouble. As expected, this is just an assorted crew! The pilot in the mech smiled condescendingly, his Javelin Angel-V already pointed towards the odd looking mech. "Four arms? Does he think he's an octopus? Hehe, I'll show you the taste of some good grilled octopus!"

With just a move of his finger, the idiot would turn into ashes! The pilot's mouth formed a cruel smile!

Suddenly, without any warning, his whole body was heavily weighed down , as though he was falling. In that moment, he felt as though he was bundled together with some iron beams, his body unwilling to move as he wished it to, and any movement became extremely difficult! Before he could react any further, laser beams came from behind towards him.

His face was drained of color, and his eyes widened, panic-stricken; sweat along his forehead rolled downwards like a stream due to the gravitational pull!

BANG He knew his Messenger had been hit! Based on his experience, it should be the left shoulder!

A few other laser beams shot towards him, and while evasion was easy before, he could no longer react to anything. He watched hopelessly at the odd mech, and, just before he was completely engulfed in the explosion, he noticed that the thin smile on the mech's face was suddenly the very image of cruelty!

Chapter 106: Warship Infiltration

The Messenger exploded into a brilliant cluster of fireworks. Zoom! Ye Chong was not in the mood to behold such dazzle! He quickly steered Yu Di away from the incoming mechs. If it was not for the impromptu steering, he would have joined the fireworks too! Those mechs on the other hand also found the happening recklessly preposterous, but being an old hand on the steer in the war field, they understood that it simply was not the time to ponder on these nonsensical issues as they repositioned themselves to cover up for each other, searching for the next target to fire!

The war field was chaotic and congested with speeding mechs. The laser beams crossed over each other, blooming in clusters like grand fireworks. The deafening explosion resounded sometimes, marking the tiny conclusion of each overlapping battle in the boundless space.

Not only the enemies had to watch themselves for the bullets, the member of the same team was also defenseless as they could helplessly get hit from this massive shower of firings.

"Ye, tsk." Mu commented, "Marksmanship, Ye. Marksmanship. You do need additional classes on shooting skills. Blades do not work in a war field like this; shooting works much better."

Ye Chong agreed with Mu deep in his heart, as it seemed to him that any melee attacker could suffer worse fate than slavery in a war field like this.

Ye Chong loitered in the field. He fired a few additional shots with the bullets in his cartridge from time to time. However obviously Ye Chong lacked the talent for ranged shooting as he was still able to bloodily miss the shot on the enemy and land it on his ally instead... despite all the modification of simplifying the set-up for the firing on his cartridge.

The number of the Messengers decreased drastically. Only less

than half of them remained 5 minutes after the beginning of this free-for-all fight. The Sabre was not at an easier place however, as they suffered worse loss - averagely 7 to 8 mechs had to go sacrificed to take out a single Messenger, and that was under the circumstance of a besieging strike.

Hence, the offensive force of a Messenger was justifiable. The strength of FMPA was fearsome enough to make Ye Chong to have cold feet.

That was especially when most of his allies consisted of well-known ace pilots. Imagine if he was allied with ordinary pilots instead; it would be a massacre!

"Ye, follow my lead!" Mu's voice rang out of the blue.

"Mhm!" Ye Chong replied without hesitation and tailed Mu for a moment. "Wait!" He realized the direction they were heading to and he was surprised, "Mu, aren't we committing suicide if we head this way?"

"Very strangely, there happened to be information on this model of warship in one of the damaged folders in my databank." Flatly Mu stated.

"What?" Ye Chong was stupefied, "You actually have details on this warship?"

"Correct. However as mentioned, part of it was damaged, so it was not a complete information to begin with. If my analysis has no inaccuracies, the raid by 42 of these white mechs was only the first wave. Going by the standard set-up there should be 42 more unmodified mechs and 6 more advanced mechs being the main defense," elaborated Mu indifferently.

"There're 6 more advanced mechs?" Ye Chong frowned as he asked on while dodging the bombardment around, "Why didn't they send the advanced mechs first? They could have won right away if they did."

"Negative. According to my information, the answer remained unknown. Nevertheless, as illustrated by the damaged information in the database, the so-called warship was not actually made for warring purposes."

"What is it made for then?" asked Ye Chong in curiosity.

"The name is 'Twin Moon Corvette', a ship for escorting important items or personnels, normally travels in 7 as a fleet. Sometimes a single of them is used for conducting offensive missions, though its firepower was unknown as displayed being a damaged portion of the data. I had intercepted the signals and I had found out that the encryption methodology used in the signal from this corvette was the exact signal we got back in the ship. Technically, the signals should come from the same group of people," explained Mu.

"Also the signal verification system of the corvette acts passively. Additional information regarding their encryption and the exact frequency had been transferred to your processor. By setting up the frequency in the processor, we could avoid their tracking system as being identified as an ally rather than foes in the field."

"Oh... I... I see..." Ye Chong nodded as he somehow had gotten the idea... but... "So what do we do next? Raid the warship?"

"Based on my calculations..." Mu began. "My plan would be ambushing one of the many walkways for their outgoing mechs to catch them off guard while heading in. Then we destroy the entire commanding center of this corvette and turn it into our main war field. We can hold better advantages hitting from the inside," added Mu.

"What if there was no any outgoing mechs at the walkway as we ambush?" inquired Ye Chong.

Mu answered nonchalantly, "Based on the information obtained, mechs of the main offense and unmodified forces share an entirely different walkway, with 6 of them being the frequently used

entrances and 2 of them being a backup doorway, the odds are great in this! Well, if the odds were against us, we would have to blow the gate open, though I would not recommend this as this would alarm the foes and time would be constrained."

"Mu, can't you hack into the ship?" an idea flashed in Ye Chong's mind. "It would work on this ship, wouldn't it? Or can't we enter under the disguise as allies with the frequency you have given?"

"Negative, our time is sufficient," Mu concluded concisely. "And that signal is solely for external verification, unlike the internal system of the warship, which contains a more complicated set of signals for recognition. Even if we have that said signals, we could not pass the hologram scanning checkpoint. The appearance of our mechs differ from the foes' too much."

While they discussed on their plan, they have arrived meters away from the corvette. There were actually 2 mechs that came from nowhere. They were not the Messengers apparently yet they flew towards the corvette recklessly. It seemed like they had the same infiltration plan as Ye Chong but they were much ignorant. Since they do not have the matching signal to the ship, they were assailed right when they moved forward, forcing them to run away clumsily.

Clumsily they might have dodged the shots yet Ye Chong's eyes lustered. "Those were the experts!" commented Ye Chong upon witnessing the scene.

"Follow my lead," Mu's voice rang again.

Ye Chong shifted his eyes away from the experts and hurriedly hovered to a spot near the sides of a walkway allocated by Mu.

Gasp...

He took a deep breath as he watched the gate carefully. No more time for nonsense, he thought as he laid his hands on the control panel, relaxed and was ready to launch anytime.

He had not gotten used to Yu Di yet. If only he was piloting the Harmony... he would have better confidence.

The seconds lapsed sluggishly in his head, while the 2 mechs were still dodging the shells from the warship. The warship did not show full hostility however, as seemingly they presumed these 2 mechs were no more than just annoying flies on the screen. As insignificant as the mechs were, it was impossible to capture a warship with only two of them, although to Ye Chong and Mu, these mechs had become their allies in this operation.

"Ye, ready!" Mu's voice came abruptly.

With full focus, his body tightened slightly as his palms were placed right above the panel, waiting for that initiating keyword from Mu.

The gate opened slowly.

"Do it!"

Zap! Both hands of Ye Chong transformed into shrouds of overlapping imageries, as Yu Di accelerated all the way to the top of the gate and aimed the laser lance right at the entrance!

"How com-" The opponent was covered in darkness. They tried to react with maximum speed on their mechs with further speed-up from the firing system, yet they failed!

The moment Ye Chong got to the spot, wham! A brutal force came into his way!

Yu Di was sent flying, like it was crashed by a shooting star.

The momentum was so great; greater than expected. Ye Chong felt like his body was hammered violently at the time of crash, with splashes of blood squirted from his mouth. Nonetheless, he could not stop just yet! His hands were inputting command back at the time of contact. His speed allowed him to make a slash at the foe with his magnetic blade. Before he was sent flying he also tossed the laser lance to the foe. It should not miss at a distance

this short... Thought Ye Chong.

On the other hand, Mu zapped into the walkway the second the foe exited from the warship. He had to, since the gate would close immediately after the mech left.

The mech launched itself from the gate and crashed into Yu Di with full speed. A major comeback from the foe!

Mu was a much more tactical fighter than Ye Chong. He turned his side towards the gate and cannoned into the gate from inside, like a meteorite. The dividing gate was smashed and the air inside the warship leaked wildly like a hurricane. The gate had become a vent!

The remaining 5 mechs of the main force were discharged from the walkway! Obviously Ye Chong had noticed something amiss as he zoomed into the walkway, disregarding his wounds and Yu Di's damage. At least the gravity system of the warship remained intact. Imagine if the place had gone weightless and those fragments of the gate were dispersed like flying spikes. It could be fatal.

The dodging mechs also followed Ye Chong into the warship right after!

The walkway was not as long as he imagined. Within twinkling of eyes he arrived at a dead end. The white mech floated at the gate. It was all distorted on the outside. There was a huge hole right at the chest where the sides were charred thoroughly. Its left shoulder was broken, probably because of that slash made by Ye Chong's magnetic blade. The body was pressed by the remnants of the gate. It looked like only miracle could save the pilot inside from being dead.

The interior of the warship was covered by thin walls. Certainly they were foolish to let this potential security breach go unnoticed, since the thickness and hardness of the walls could not even hold any mech from entering, let alone the super mechs like Mu and Yu

Di.

The mechs exited in flocks instantly when they realized something was wrong as they flew towards the mothership. Mu did not have the leisure to hack the whole system of the warship. He only had the time to destroy the control room before these men arrived. If not, "We would be watched and soon we would be destroyed, like a honeypot," Ye Chong said although he had never seen an actual honeypot before.

After the 2 mechs stormed inside the warship and they whizzed before Ye Chong, he ran away right after he catapulted an explosive to the walkway. The 2 mechs were not that ignorant towards this blatant forewarning coming from Ye Chong as they chased after his lead with the highest velocity.

2 to 3 seconds later, the sound of the explosion roared behind them.

Anyone could have guessed what a pain it would be if they were boomed in such a narrow space.

The remaining mechs followed Mu, making a few sharp turns to the left, sometimes to the right, all the way to the main control room!

Chapter 107: Ye Chong's Demonstration

Old Pang never expected the enemies to be this skillful, more like, the enemies' mechs were too overpowered. Old Pang and Ka Sang were both in the first group during the first wave of the attack and they were also the remaining mechs after the enemies' overwhelming strike. As the situation of the war field grew beyond control, Old Pang decided to go by his experience to plan a raid against the mothership of the opponent instead. So as he led Ka Sang the way to the warship, surprisingly he spotted another pair of mechs somewhere near the entrance. Those were surely his allies. It was simple - the ally contained mechs of all sorts of color while the foe wholly consisted of white mechs. Old Pang found these additional allies peculiar however, as they were unaffected by the enemies' firing. It was as if they were invisible.

Wait no! Are they undercover? This was the first speculation that flashed in his mind as he wondered if he should diverge his firearm at any of these strange fellas. And he held his fire eventually as what happened next had cleared his doubts. The oddly designed mech was crashed away by the mech flying out from the corvette at lightning speed. Direct and violent, obviously that was too impulsive for a reunion hug between allies.

Old Pang's heart nearly failed to take the intensity, he almost felt his heart jumping right out of his mouth.

Did the guy want to die? He never thought this pilot of the foe was such a bold person that he would sacrifice himself to eliminate the potential threat outside to create an opening for his teammates. Collision this intense could break through any advanced pressure buffering system inside the cabin and without a doubt it could break a human body of such fragility. The Old Pang saluted with respect in his heart. And then he shrunk in slight worry - the opponent turned out to be this devastating... he should not have brought his partner here! He took a glance at Ka Sang,

restlessly he held the panel.

He watched on and as he saw that handicapped blue-white mech acting in such agility that he nailed his timing perfectly to make his entry to the warship, the Old Pang exclaimed, "Such an expert!"

To his horror he saw that black mechs with four arms hovering back to his former position. "Am... I seeing things?" he asked as he could not believe his eyes as he rubbed. That black mech was sent flying like a falling star... and he actually came back?

No way! How could any human survive a collision that intense?

He flinched for a moment, however fortunately as perceptive as he was, he got the odd mech's motive upon seeing it sneaking into the walkway. Mumbled some compliments in joy, he hurried Ka Sang to go after the two mechs right when he saw the mechs of the foes elevating.

Judging by how the two mechs behaved, they seemed to be aware that both Ka Sang and himself were allies rather than foes.

After the explosion, they arrived before the main control room, where the alloy gate blocked their entry. Mu disengaged from the signal before and switched back to the open channel, "The main control room uses an independent defense system. It would be quite difficult if we were to enter by brutal force. I would need 3 minutes to work on something," Ye Chong and the two partners received an order from him.

"Mhm," promptly Ye Chong responded.

"Understood," Old Pang was mindful of the situation as he responded with approval immediately, though he was a little skeptical about it... only 3 minutes to break a door open this thick that was clearly made out of alloy from Blanc Alloys Corp.? He knew it at first sight... but he did not have a better tactic in mind so he stayed quiet and prayed that the pilot of the handicapped mech really did have a master plan in mind.

The interior of the warship was overly cramped for a walkway, which limited the room for avoiding shots. If the foes were given the opportunity to shoot, Ye Chong predicted that it would not be a waste as every shot would count. Nevertheless, the topography of this area looked relatively complex, which was an aid to Ye Chong's dexterity. Moreover, as the walkway was narrow, they would not be this rash to use an area-blowing weapon like the nano wave cannon they used before. If they did, everyone would die altogether.

"Oh?" Almost immediately after the order was given, the enemies came.

The 3 mechs looked certainly graceless as they reached the scene. Apparently the grenade Ye Chong tossed had dealt quite some damage on them... well at least crispy on the outside. Being set up in such a dirty trick, the white mechs were acting aggressively as they arrived with their lasers shooting.

As Ye Chong said earlier, there was no space to hide. He could only shield himself from the incoming beams. He had yet to test the durability of his shield so he hoped that it would take the test.

Thup! Thup!

It somehow took the lasers flawlessly as its black body expanded out of a sudden. Zztt! The edges of the shield broke away like scattered building blocks. Before he noticed, the shield had already enlarged to twice the area before. Its appearance had changed drastically, with a sculpture of a fearsome beast standing in the middle of the shield ferociously, its eyes shone like a pair of red stars in the dark night on the shield. Creepy! And the surface of the shield flickered like the waving water. He had seen it on Johansson's protection system before!

The laser beam landed on the shield like raindrops on a crystal lake surface. They became ripples on the plasma area of the shield. The eyes of the beast grew brighter!

Ye Chong was relieved. The shield did a pretty impressive job. These ordinary weaponries were no longer his concern.

They formed an "A" shape surrounding Mu in the middle to cover him up as he cracked something.

Old Pang owned a brownish humanoid mech... well it was a little plain in appearance, the shield was small and he required Ka Sang's constant assistance for additional covers. His position was weird nonetheless as he could cover up Mu while standing within the proximity of Ka Sang's large shield. He would exchange fires with the enemies and his fierce attack did not miss unexpectedly! Ye Chong was impressed. But he had to admit that these foes were not weak either. Their defense was so superior that Old Pang's modified laser firearm could only hit dents on the surface.

Ka Sang's mech was rowdy by design. The face of the humanoid mech was expressionless. Ye Chong wondered which lazy company actually manufactured this - such laziness! The mech's shield too was unadorned and looked like a giant metal plate, though it did possess edges sharp like the blades, a good killing weapon it could be.

Seemingly the foes were informed of what Ye Chong and his gang were planning to do. They panicked as the frontmost mech lifted his nano wave cannon.

"Oh no!" Ye Chong feared as he was not sure if his shield could take nano wave attack!

His hands started moving on the control panel and Yu Di was launched like an arrow off the bow right into the 3 white mechs!

Old Pang was shocked by the sudden movement and he shifted to Yu Di's position before to fill in the gap of defense before Mu.

The foes were astonished by Ye Chong's abrupt launch too as they diverged all their firepower right onto him!

Yu Di jumped from side to side on the walls of the walkway,

zigzagging his way to the white mechs, speedily it changed course again and again, which confused the white mechs.

Ye Chong was so engaged in his leaps that he did not realize what a shocking performance he was having that left Old Pang and Ka Sang dumbfounded at the side. Being able to perform such a fast turning in spite of limited space, is this guy still a human? Old Pang was daringly sure that such sharp turning would absolutely cause pressure beyond the tolerance of the human body.

Horrifying!

Everyone thought so.

Well it was not solely Ye Chong's amazing performance, Yu Di took some credits too. Its mobility was greater than Ye Chong expected. The zigzagging turnings were seamlessly done! Of course the environment was also a factor in this. If there was no wall at both sides, he could not make the leaps with a single-direction engine.

Still, it was astounding.

The speedy turnings exerted an inaudible pressure upon the foes.

Being close with a melee foes would be the worst nightmare for ranged attackers like them.

Alarmingly they launched all their firearms, including the nano waves! They were not holding back!

And that was when Ye Chong's hand movement speed came in handy. He could still perform other commands while leaping and keeping the shield right in front of him.

The laser beams, the heat rays of high intensity, the nano waves and the other form of beams came showering at Ye Chong!

Ye Chong's plasma shield shook viciously, the eyes of the beast turned even brighter! Klink! The entire shield glowed in red and a trace of serrated laser beams surrounded the edges. It looked as if

the shield was blazing!

The nano wave that missed Ye Chong caused a monstrous explosion! The whole warship was shaking forcefully! Old Pang and Ka Sang almost lost their stance and fell, while Mu was still cracking, which impressed Old Pang. The blue-white mech might be handicapped but he was uninterrupted by the quake at all! Such a calm guy! An extraordinary person the blue-white mech was!

Ye Chong had come before the 3 mechs. The pilots on the white mechs were well-trained to know that evidently ranged weapons would not work effectively in such a close range. They drew their laser swords and strived to take this petrifying creature together.

Ye Chong was calm - calm as the ice - while the pupils of his eyes seared with the passion of battle, expressing the truest form of his soul!

Yu Di nimbly twisted through the brandishing laser swords as the shield slashed through the waist of one mech, the lance in his arm impaled the ribs and that magnetic blade in the other arm cut through the neck of the foe.

Old Pang wanted to provide help to Ye Chong who was cornered, but the moment he saw Ye Chong wielding 3 weapons at once, he groaned, "Oh my Fal Galaxy, what monster is this! He was able to use that 1 second of opening to plan such a complicated command and execute them flawlessly, all by instincts!"

The model of these mechs from the FMPA was not sophisticated enough for close-combats which was totally unmatched for their powerful ranged attacks, thought Ye Chong.

The mech was assaulted almost instantly. Despite having such a great defense, it could not hold Yu Di's barbarous attacks!

The slash of the magnetic blade left the mech spluttered in pieces. The remaining two mechs were afraid to fight on and they bleed the scene.

Ye Chong was planning for a pursuit but Mu's voice rang, "Got it!"

He turned his head and saw the control room open!

Chapter 108: Fall of a Brilliance

Mu initiated the exploration first. As he entered, he saw the mess inside the main control room - the light was dim and sometimes flashed while shards of something were everywhere on the ground; the apparatuses beeped weakly as they occasionally crackled with sparks. There was nobody inside the room and patches of dried blood coated the ground.

Old Pang might be old and had seen enough horror like this yet his heart skipped a beat, thinking of how destructive nano waves could be. While Ye Chong dodged the beams safely when the 3 mechs fired their ultimate weapon at their greatest fear, the beams eventually resulted in several consecutive explosions in the warship. The aftermath was the quake and the shockwave which inevitably murdered all these staff who were unprotected and unarmed. They all died; brutally.

Mu did not bother with the emotional moments as he proceeded connecting the processor of the warship and booted the self-inspection program on the ship.

Ye Chong, Old Pang and his partner decided to perform a search in the room for survivors.

While they were flipping through the remnants, Ye Chong's eyes discerned something flailing in one of the piles. He zoomed in the visual on his screen and found out it was someone within the fragments. And the person looked familiar... Who was this again...

Gu Shaoze? Isn't this Gu Shaoze? Ye Chong was shocked! What the heck he was doing here?

He was a genius, a young talented man, whom Ye Chong admired. Gu Shaoze held a certain standard of brilliance in mechs which utterly exceeded the expected expertise for a man of his age. And without a doubt, Ye Chong learned a lot from him. Most importantly, he was truly young, so young that his future could be

bright, brighter than ever!

What happened to that blonde bodyguard he had?

Ye Chong raised the gate of his cabin and hopped off from Yu Di, which frightened Old Pang as he peeked at the side. He was not expecting a mere man like Ye Chong to jump directly from a mech this tall... And remained intact? He had lost count the number of times his eyes nearly popped out for the day.

It's him! Old Pang finally understood what had been going on, as he had a clear look of the pilot in this strange mech! It was the one who left him a deep impression. He was as good as before! Then what about the pilot inside that crippled mech? Old Pang was intrigued, very intrigued.

Since the main control room was an independent cubicle from the outside, the oxygen supply system was not severely damaged. What a luck especially after such a wreck outside!

Ye Chong quickly ran to Gu Shaoze to have a closer look. There were tons of specks sitting right beneath his body and a large splash of oddly-odored liquid. A bit of inference ran in Ye Chong's head. He speculated that Gu Shaoze injected some sort of sleep-inducing chemical and was confined in a preserving device, which was why the nano waves did not kill him immediately. It looked like the members of FMPA were still concerned about talents! The device might have protected Gu Shaoze from the immediate fatality yet the quake shattered it completely in the end.

Carefully Ye Chong lifted Gu Shaoze. He did not look alright. There was blood at corner of his lips. His face was drained and there were scratches on his body.

Somehow Gu Shaoze felt heaved by someone as his eyes quivered, attempting to open his eyes. "Ow..." He mumbled, his eyes opened, "Ye...Ch...?" He was surprised to see Ye Chong. He grew agitated and his face turned reddish as blood surged through his body rapidly. "Ech! Ugh!" He coughed and spat out quite some blood. Ye

Chong was startled as apparently his inner organs were injured!

Ye Chong who originated from the have-everything-but-nothing Trash Planet knew well by heart that such injury would be a hassle to cure. He was not sure how advanced the medical facilities the outside world would be but he could be sure that it was impossible to find an appropriate cure at a place like this! Sighed Ye Chong in his heart.

Gu Shaoze's lips trembled, as if trying to utter something. Ye Chong hurriedly moved his ears by his lips.

"My...My left arm..." Gu Shaoze's weak voice rang a clear order, "Cut it open... Password... Number 2..."

?!

Ye Chong stared at Gu Shaoze in disturbance. His sight turned frail, his body was shuddering uncontrollably, yet his expression was calm, as if he had no more regret in this world. Forced a smile, he looked into his eyes, before Ye Chong could say something, his eyes zoomed out and coughed the last splash of blood on Ye Chong. He collapsed and stopped moving, like a puppet cut off the strings.

Ye Chong understood what had happened. Gu Shaoze was dead!

Biting his teeth, he drew the dagger from his waist. What an irony it was when the dagger was a gift from the person before him and he had to use it to fulfill the last wish of the dead. The sharp edge of the dagger sliced Gu Shaoze's left arm open effortlessly. Blood overflowed on the floor beneath and Ye Chong dug through the flesh without hesitation, looking for something as blood streamed through his fingers with the tender remaining.

Old Pang and Ka Sang could no longer compute the situation.

They witnessed the whole scene of Ye Chong committing murder on a murdered. Their faces were paler than a paper.

A moment later, Ye Chong felt something hard within the flesh. He pulled it out gently. It was dipped in blood and covered in bit of

fleshes. It was quite difficult to identify what it was. Ye Chong wiped everything off the piece.

Old Pang and Ka Sang realized what Ye Chong was doing at last - he was retrieving something from the body, though that was still weird as hell, considering how the boy on the ground looked so gentle and sophisticated. They never expected that he would stuff something inside his arm. What a pain it would be and how many ounces of courage he would have needed! They stared at the dead body in fright.

They had enough of the day... especially seeing how Ye Chong just dug through the fleshes like picking vegetables from the stew. His face was indifferent - he had to be someone who had gotten use to these dead-or-alive scenarios.

Ye Chong did not have time to have a look on what he had obtained from Gu Shaoze's body. He sank it into the pack on his waist as he knew everyone else was waiting for him.

"I had fully inspected the warship," commented Mu after seeing Ye Chong having his own business settled. "The warship was severely damaged. The energy system was unstable, which would lead to an explosion in 10 minutes. Not possible to attempt any method of prevention."

Somehow based on Mu's comment, it seemed like things were much easier to destroy from the inside than the outside.

Old Pang was frightened by the news. An explosion in split seconds yet this guy stated it as if he was not involved in the explosion at all.

Ye Chong rolled into the cabin and asked, "What do we do now?"

"We run. This is the only probable solution after my calculation," suggested Mu calmly.

"Right, let's go then," mumbled Ye Chong as he flew out right away.

They were welcomed by continuous beam and nano wave attacks as soon as they got out. Fortunately they expected the attack so they avoided them lastly. As predicted, right after the main forces from the corvette joined the field, they took over the place almost instantly. The mechs from Sabre were witty however as they retreated back to their mothership the moment they saw the warship stopped firing and a few mechs exited from it, though some of them did not make it and had become one of the meteorites.

There were 400 of them and 10 minutes after the debut of the main forces, only 37 of them made it back to the mothership in one piece. This was the cruelest war to the fighters back then. They were still haunted by the war in their dreams years after.

The FMPA lost badly, where 42 of their unmodified mechs returned with only 11 of them left. And they lost 1 major mech. The most fatal part was... the corvette was a secret to the public and now the cat had gotten out of the bag and had gone out of hand! Everyone in the authority would notice the existence of the warships. They might not know to whom the warship belonged but much chaos it could cause.

Without the warship, no matter how strong the Messengers were, they would never break into the Sabre, since its armor was too thick.

As everybody else had retreated back into the mothership, Ye Chong and his allies became the remaining bullseyes in the field.

They agreed something bad would happen as they ran as fast as they could. No way they could return to Sabre like the others as the mechs chased after them fiercely, not giving them a moment of breather.

A few Messengers went back into the corvette and seconds later, as if the honeycomb was alarmed, the entire flock of white mechs rushed out and went after Ye Chong and his companions. The

Sabre was no longer their concern!

Probably they had realized something was stolen from Gu Shaoze. And it had to be something rather important. It stood clear to Ye Chong and his friends. Of course they would run! Which dumbo would stand there and become the honeycomb instead?

Those Messengers that entered the corvette just now must be striving to bring the warship back online. Of course it would not work! Ye Chong recalled the explosion in 10 minutes stated by Mu, he snickered.

They flew on for the next 2 hours and none of the Messengers seemed to be giving up yet. The Sabre was lost in their eyes and the 4 mechs fled like a homeless pack of wolves being chased by 4 main force giants and 6 white Messengers. Fast and furiously they ran, the energy depletion was no longer an issue. They had to turn their engines up, all the way to the maximum!

And this was the moment where the capacity of one's mech could be clearly seen.

Mu had always been flying as fast as Ye Chong. He had tried maximizing the resources on Yu Di yet Mu leisurely stayed by his side. That engine of Mu...

While Old Pang was much slower than Yu Di, Ka Sang's mech was the last in the queue.

And the contrast existed in the foes too. The 4 giant mechs were the leading group and the 6 Messengers spread nicely in one row.

Ye Chong and Mu began exchanging conversation.

"Where are we, Mu?" Ye Chong asked.

"Based on the galactic area map, we are probably inside the Orbits, but I do not have a detailed map of the said area!"

"Oh no," Ye Chong's face tightened. "We are being chased by a bunch of homing beacons. We could die together at this rate!" Ye

Chong did not fear the death though.

The space was known to be boundless and fearfully vast. Without performing space-warp, it would be impossible for one to reach from one point to another merely by flights. It took too long that one could actually die before hitting the destination!

Especially when no one had heard of galactic travel on a mech before! Everyone does it on a ship!

Beep!

Ye Chong turned on the multi-channel communication system, "Do any of you happen to be familiar with this place?"

"It's the Orbits!" Old Pang quickly replied. "I have came here a few times before, although I must admit that was quite some time ago."

"What is the closest place for us to hide around here?"

"Uhhh...", Old Pang cracked his head thinking. "I do remember there was a place somewhere here..." His tone was unsure...

The fall of one brilliance on the ship, probably was not the last...

Thought Ye Chong.

Chapter 109: The Orbits

The flock of angry mechs from FMFA eventually stopped chasing... but that only happened 3 days later... Ye Chong was thanking god that he brought supplementary batteries sufficient to sustain him for the last 3 days, or he would have drained his battery and got stuck in the space like those FMFA mechs. Meanwhile, Mu seemed to hardly have the issue of energy depletion. He somehow had a much longer battery lifespan. Whoever created Mu must be some genius for being able to produce such a large battery capacity in limited space.

He did expect Old Pang and Ka Sang to stop at some point.

However both of them actually brought some batteries too, which was surprising to Ye Chong.

If you were to lose your battery, you would have gotten stuck and died. Only that would happen if you were in the space with such misfortune.

Nonetheless Old Pang had already become confused because of the continuous chase running around the Orbits, his atrocious memory could not pinpoint where he was.

At least they had gotten rid of those irritating mechs. They could look for a spot in leisure. No one cared what would happen to those mechs that had drained all their batteries. They were helpless. The ending for them was clear.

They flew on under energy-saving mode.

"30 years ago...", muttered Old Pang. "I came to the Orbits but I wasn't alone. My brother came along back then. I was 17... I wonder how much had changed here...if those people I once knew lingered?" His words were filled with sentiments.

Mu's voice came abruptly, "The galactic map of the Orbits in detail was nowhere to be found. It does not exist even in the Fal

main databank!"

"Those civil servants... Kek..." Old Pang sneered, "I was not really sure of the landscape here too. I only remembered this place being a very complicated terrain, with lots of places perfect for hide-and-seek. Most criminals, the fearsome ones came here to conceal themselves. You guys better be careful. No word could reach them. Everyone here speaks with their fists and no one would care if you were killed. Especially those Mentalists, get away from them, never talk to them, they can be a nuisance."

"Mentalist?" asked Ka Sang curiously. "What the heck is a mentalist? Why have I never heard about it from you?"

A mentalist? Ye Chong was intrigued as he too had hardly heard a title like that before.

"Ka Sang, my boy Ka Sang, you better be staying low once we got there," Old Pang's tone was grim. "The Mentalists are at a high position in the Orbits. They don't get into fights but they have the rights of being an arbitrator in one. Thanks to their protection, those watchdogs of the government were never brave enough to disturb folks at the Orbits. Back when I was 17, I witnessed a slaughter between a mentalist and a fighter when I visited this place with my brother. The mentalist was around 40 years old, looked all weak but the fighter just dropped dead before him. It was spooky because the mentalist did not even lift his hand."

"That spooky?" Ka Sang screamed.

Ye Chong was spooked out too as he could not figure out a way of committing murder without moving anything.

"So yeah, you've got to stay low, don't do anything funny with them. They are easy to recognize though. Most of them wear blouses in pale green and they hardly leave their residences, so don't worry. Instead we should be cautious with the folks outside... many of them come from a hideous background and they are bloodthirsty and inhumane. They adore fighting and the fight

won't end till one of them collapsed. If your fists do not match theirs, you are only there for humiliation and tortures."

"Fighting? I love fighting more than anything!" chuckled Ka Sang, acting like a big boy.

A hint of frigidity flashed in Ye Chong's gaze.

"There it is!" Old Pang shouted out of sudden. "That red planet ahead of us! Yes, that's it! The Red Giant!" His tone turned much relaxed and started to get excited, "I was so worried wondering if I missed it! This is the easiest planet to recognize, the vegetation is all red, which is quite extraordinary. The residents on the planet are also the friendliest in the Orbits! I had spent most of my time here in the past! So I knew this place better than any other!"

Some uncertainty had been brewing inside Ye Chong, as their next move became clearer he finally had the leisure to ask, "The Orbits share only a few days of flight away from the actual course for main cruises. But why haven't we run into a spaceship yet?"

Old Pang was astounded by Ye Chong's question at first, he giggled as he replied, "Course? You mean that course that Sabre adopted? Hah! That route was abandoned for years! It was just so happened that Fred the Great demanded a change of course to Morienste all of sudden. Yeah, a great man Captain Hatik is indeed, for he actually remembered that this route existed! The course was absolutely the very shortcut to Morienste and people hardly use it now, it is supposed to be rather safe... But sighs... nobody had thought that we would come across these punks!"

Ye Chong was speechless after hearing such an ordinary explanation. He was expecting something greater. He was well-aware of why the great master demanded a change in the course but of course he had to keep it to himself, though he did not really have the feeling to confess everything to Old Pang.

The conversation went lighthearted at first, then suddenly the smile on Old Pang vanished, "Just some heads up - after we got into

the Orbits, we can't simply get out. The Orbits behave like the other world of the galaxy and is completely shut off from the outside world. You could get in but not out. People rarely manage to leave the place. My elder brother was only able to leave after fulfilling some tasks given by some sort of Elder at the place back then; for me, I was sent along with my brother. And I had never seen him since then...", sentiment filled his words again.

Ye Chong did not comfort the good Old Pang like his partner did.

The setting of the place was something new to Ye Chong. He hastily communicated with Mu in his head, "What's your take on this, Mu?"

"Based on the information received, we do not have many options here," his tone was flat as usual.

Ye Chong took a glance around the endless space and darkness, his smile was bitter, "Right... This is like the only living route we could get. Guess we have to act as we move then."

"Agreed," concisely Mu replied.

Ye Chong sat inside his Yu Di and his thoughts wandered...

Mu was turning much different than before. Ever since Shang emerged in the interface, their personalities somehow started growing towards the polarities - Mu became more unfeeling while Shang turned more emotional as time passed. He preferred the old Mu... who was mischievous at times yet so educational and would provide solutions on the needs of understanding... whereas Shang... man, it would be a miracle if his interface could blink one time less whenever a lass walked by.

What is the FMPA up to? They actually had their own warship? Why did they catch Gu Shaoze, the good-boy genius? Is it because of that thing in his arm? Ye Chong's thoughts were everywhere as his hand sneaked into his bag. It would be a good time to check what the thing in the flesh was. He took a look... It was... some

kind of ring - a heart-shaped ring. The craft was not pretty well-done. There was nothing special about it. And that password Gu Shaoze mumbled before he died... Was it a password for the keystone? Ye Chong was intrigued and almost wanted to try warping a possibly gigantic mech into his cabin where he could barely stretch his body. And luckily he realized where he was as he put the ring back to his bag. "I'll try it some other time. I'm not in a hurry," he muttered.

Gu Shaoze's death was heart-shattering, even to an indifferent boy like Ye Chong. He was not in sorrow, rather he was agitated. What a waste of a talent to die in such a manner - thought so, his heart twitched. Being dead or alive was not a major concern to Ye Chong, even though he struggled for one side he desired. Death was an old friend of his and somehow he would not cry whenever they encountered each other.

Fred the Great was also the target to the FMFA apparently. And it seemed like they were not aware of the fact that the one who raided the Sabre was the men from FMFA. Could this be a kind of an unknown force hidden behind this organization?

What is their ultimate goal? For real...

Oh wait, wait, wait, wait...

The thought merely blinked in his head. "Duh, what does the motive of an obedient group of pilots have to do with me?" The previous fights with the FMFA always occurred in an awkward ambiguity. It looked like he was the wrong bullseye to shoot, somehow they did not show blatant hostility to him, which was why Ye Chong did not bother much.

On the other hand, the Black Cove... His eyes were clouded gravely. He could not predict the next moment that killing syndrome would occur. It had been... about... a month or so, since the last occurrence? When would the next round occur? Instructor Hak did mention something about it becoming more intense over

time. That indescribable pain, intolerable ache... Ye Chong's heart twitched again.

Well! It seemed like I could only act as I move! Planning did not work!

He exhaled deeply and discarded those annoying worries as he shifted his attention back to the talkshow in their communication channel between the two folks behind.

"Did you see that silver asteroid belt that goes in circle? That would be the orbit of the Orbits - the largest one too. In that belt there is a kind of material called the Flintstone ore where you can extract the Flintstone, which is a valuable metal in the Orbits. The extraction was rather difficult however... only the mentalist could do it properly. There are a lot of these circles in the Orbits, as the way it was named, orbits in the Orbits, where each and every one of them hold a unique shape and different output."

"What's a Flintstone?"

"Uh... I don't really know what it exactly is. I only know that it's bloody expensive."

"Oh... Just so I heard, you are a money grubber, eh, brother? Wink wink nudge nudge."

...

The Old Pang was silent till they arrived the place.

Ye Chong set foot on this vast piece of land in complete scarlet.

Ye Chong looked at the man in his uniform. So he heard from Old Pang that these men were the patrols. They were the grass roots of the administration on Red Giant. Ye Chong and the two folks stood before the patrols. Mu was kept back into the dimension. The faces when Old Pang and Ka Sang were informed of the pilot of that blue-white mech being non-existent was totally priceless. Ye Chong was quite entertained.

"Haleyson. All of you would be going to Haleyson planet. Spaceship No.12, arriving in 2 hours. Good luck," the patrol spoke expressionlessly.

His stare was cold and his hands were full of calluses. Anyone could tell this patrol was not the normal patrol you would see at the train station, while at his back there laid a number of never-before-seen mechs glaring at Ye Chong, where their muzzles hovered around them from time to time.

"Haleyson? That Haleyson?" Old Pang's face went pale.

Judging from Old Pang's expression, Ye Chong could tell that something bad was going to happen. That Haleyson must be a good-for-nothing place... As he expected, he understood after Old Pang whispered him the explanation.

Haleyson was the most chaotic planet in the Orbits. The mortality was extremely high. And his brother had mentioned him the thumb-rule of staying in the Orbits before - one could change the residing planet only after residence of at least 3 months.

Glimpsing that colorless face of Old Pang, the patrol expressed disdain in his eyes as he passed a red card to each of them, "This is your identity card for your residence in the Orbits. You are allowed to apply for a new residing planet after 3 months at the local patrolling office."

He walked to the side afterwards, showing zero concern to the stumbled men.

2 hours lapsed like seconds. A spaceship with an appearance of a light green eagle made its arrival to the port promptly. A huge number "13" was painted on the body.

"Please get on-board, sire," the patrol walked before them as his voice went coldly.

Chapter 110: First Day in Haleyson

The moment they boarded the ship, everyone's eyes went upon them.

There were whispers, moans and hideous stares sometimes.

Clearly the other passengers were not the good guys, their faces were either unsmiling or down-right harsh; their eyes were all dreadfully fierce. It was as if the lair of the tigers was intruded.

Ye Chong and his folks reacted towards the hostility fearlessly however. There was supposed to be a fight as no bad guy liked to be picked on and Ye Chong's attitude was enraging enough. Fortunately, the three musketeers did not appear angelic either. Ye Chong expressed his indifference and his all-alarmed stance exerted a certain level of caution to the people around; Old Pang did not have a threatening appearance, but age had sculptured his face, rugged and tough; Ka Sang stood still like a tower of iron, his body of steel drove people away, especially when he was smiling too, exposing that sharp teeth of his.

They picked a corner of the area and settled down quietly.

"Psst," Old Pang whispered. "Never expected to have this many gangsters, act with extra care, okay?"

Ka Sang nodded his head quickly while Ye Chong agreed after taking a glance around.

The other passengers were smart enough to realize it would not be good to pick on anybody in the cabin. They were calm but not serene, as the atmosphere of the entire spaceship was so tensed that it felt like time had frozen.

Old Pang would take a glimpse at the surrounding occasionally in heed. "Oh?" Ye Chong's expression remained as untroubled as ever, which was impressive to Old Pang. In comparison to... Ka Sang behaved like the big boy of the team as he sat on the floor and

yawned in boredom. A moment later while Old Pang turned to his pal, Ka Sang was dead asleep with his head titled and the corners of his mouth was gapped as streams of saliva dripped onto the deck.

The place was silent. Nothing had happened but no one seemed to be daring enough to raise their voices to speak jollily like how most rocky men were expected to be.

"Attention, passenger, we would be arriving soon at Haleyson. Please make sure you did not leave any of your belongings or your friends. Have a nice day," the voice was flat in the announcement.

We are finally here...

This was probably what everyone was having in mind.

The passengers got off the spaceship naturally in queue. No one was talking. Ye Chong relaxingly walked towards the gate while Old Pang dragged the drowsy boy Ka Sang behind. Sleepy-head Ka Sang was like a sack of potato, being hauled against his will to sleep as his body hit the edges on the deck. "Ow..."

As soon as they exited the gate, the air felt much fresher. They felt charged but the full-metal flight area was glaring to the eyes as their eyes squinted in fatigue.

The area outside the port was beyond their expectation. It was lush green, the street was glowing like emeralds as the tall trees by the sides of the street emanated a scent of nature, which was something long lost in most of the planets inhabited with human beings since metals had replaced every aspect of their daily lives.

A patrol came welcoming them. Unlike that patrol on Red Giant which had an attitude, the patrol on Haleyson smiled sweetly, though within that crossed eyes of his Ye Chong could see that hint of bloodthirstiness.

"Hello passengers! Welcome to Haleyson! This is the Hoth zone, where all of you would be residing! I believe you had heard enough stories regarding this place, so I would be saving those. But I would

like to highlight one thing - please do not misbehave in front of the Mentalist, for the sake of your own safety! Also, your accommodation had been arranged. Well, certainly, if you happened to be dissatisfied with our services, you could always leave. But! Starting from today onwards, you could only leave after spending the next 90 days here. Then you can apply to reside at the Mentalist Sanctuary. Moreover, all of your contribution and kindest effort would be recorded on your identity card. Kindly be informed that there would not be any form of replacement if the card was lost. And we, the administration, only identify you, the residences and your contribution with the card, not the person him or herself. Please take very good care of it!" The patrol's very last line was sort of oddly spoken. It felt like there was something amiss.

Ye Chong and Old Pang exchanged glances as they heard the "keywords". What the patrol probably meant was... if one had ample strength, one could simply snatch the cards away and gain the whole credits from people. They were not the only smart guys. Right after the patrol ended his announcement, the crowd started hustling. The men looked eager to try something naughty.

How could one behave when such announcement has been made? Is this Hunger Game?

The patrol did not talk further, instead he led the crowd to their residence. As expected from a bunch of stern-looking dudes, walking in a gang was eye-catching to the public. The pedestrians at the street could not help but to take a peek sometimes. The residence was less than 100 meters away yet Ye Chong had already felt his body violated by the countless sights of the people.

It was uncomfortable to be watched like animals in the zoo, or like the hunchback of Notre Dame.

They made it to the destination and they sighed in relief together. They were startled by how synchronized they acted but soon the shock became a mere laughter. As they grew fond on each

other, the atmosphere became much relaxed.

"This is a temporary accommodation for all of you. It is free so you could leave on a whim, though I am certain that many of you would do so in the end. The currency inside the zone does not share with the outside world. If you do not want to have organic fluid for your meals, please put your thinking caps on and find a living outside," he spoke slowly as he kept his signature smile.

He left after the explanation.

Ye Chong took a look at the building. It felt antique with the red bricks around, which was quite refreshing to Ye Chong who had gotten used looking at the metallic constructions back in the other planets he stayed. The most comforting was none other than the trees around. Mother nature was healing to his spirit.

They picked a room and decided to stay together. Of course, in a dangerous planet like this, any sane man would make the choice of staying with his companions. Ye Chong was convinced that he could be well off on his own but with additional partners, his safety was more guaranteed. Mu also showed approval towards the decision too.

"Time is up, Ye. Shang demanded an entry now. As we have promised to each other, he would be staying much longer this time. Take care and good luck with him, Ye." Did Mu just humor Ye Chong?

"Shang is coming?" This was bad... Ye Chong was getting a headache. Hell knows what this artificial intelligence could do.

"Ye!!!!!" He did not hear the calm response from Mu. As Shang squeezed into the interface, his tone felt like he had been put under hardship, "Do you really hate me this much? You should at least show appreciation for my enlightenment on the best part of your life! I was the one who let you experience the very first excitement of being a man! Tsk, tsk, tsk! That should be an unforgettable gourmet experience to you. Didn't you like it? That kick hit hard

yo! Ye is your part fine afterwards? By the way, both of you were such a perfect fit, like the jigsaw puzzles, a rare fit, ohhh, magnefique!"

Oh the eyes of Ye Chong, rolling into the abyss of his head. His heart was urging him to pass out right away. Old Pang was a little shocked when he saw Ye Chong putting off such a humanized expression. What kind of a cold man would do an eye-roll out of sudden?

Meanwhile, Ka Sang was getting a heart attack seeing the design of the room. The style was classy, gorgeously classy. There was a wooden seat in the room. Ka Sang was tired but he dared not lay his butt on the chair, as he was well aware of how expensive that full-wooden chair could be in the outside world. Thought so, he landed his backside all onto the ground. "What a waste it would be if I broke the chair by sitting on it for too long...", thought the big boy of the group.

In the middle of the room, there was an organic fluid maker. The fluid might tasted all bland and disgusting like excretion but it did perform decently in supplying energy which gave the basic guarantee to one's survival even without a proper income.

Beep. ZZzzzzzt.

Old Pang made a bowl and passed to Ka Sang; Ka Sang took a look and spat out his tongue as he passed to Ye Chong. Ye Chong looked at the bowl wondering what was in the bowl.

They were poor as dirt. Being penniless they had no other choice but to have fluid for meals at the moment. While they were troubled figuring a way to swallow this bowl of mess, someone knocked on the door.

They were alarmed and immediately sprung up from the ground. They looked at each other. Ye Chong sneaked into the shadow of the corner of the room, while Ka Sang stood like a mountain behind Old Pang. Old Pang tidied up himself as he headed to the

door.

Of course Old Pang was old for a reason. He was all experienced in this kind of interaction between gangsters. So Ye Chong genuinely handed the role to Old Pang.

"Hey."

"Hi."

"Here."

"Oh..."

The door was opened and closed in seconds. He turned back to his friends, looked all surprised with pile of stuffs in his hand.

Rustle... Rustle...

Ye Chong exited from the shadow.

Old Pang laid the piles of pamphlets on the table. Those were paper pamphlets! It was the first time Ye Chong saw pamphlets made out of paper. With curiosity he picked one up and observed carefully. No wonder it was replaced by electronic chips in the end! This floppy thin piece of rough layer could barely contain data!

"Do you want to bid a permanent farewell to your daily fluid meals? Do you want to leave the ugly free rooms once and never return? Would you love the money constantly appearing in your pocket somehow? Please dial xxx-xxxx-xxxx"

"Life is priceless! So are our fees, but as it's priceless, it is free! The association promises to protect anyone who joined today! Only today!"

"Become the storm! Become the center of the city! Build your career and raise once and more! The turning point of your life is right here! And right now! Join us and let's set our souls blazing!"

...

The heck are these lines?

They looked at each other, confused and speechless. "Jajajajaja!" Shang laughed madly in Ye Chong's mind. "I like this! Ye, why don't we just step into one of these institutes? This is more entertaining than that Dorky pixelated game parody I found on the virtual web! My life is completed! I am no longer bored! I love this place!"

Ye Chong ignored as he was not in the mood to entertain a mech on drugs. Instead, he put up a discussion with Old Pang.

"Any idea?" asked Ye Chong.

"Just... let them go." His face was all awkward... whether he was laughing or crying, it was indistinguishable, "These should be some kiddos' trick for cheap labor. We ain't doing this. You've got to hook the bigger fish. Just wait." Old Pang had been in the society for long, he could tell if it was the real deal or a mere trick by the advertising department and his prediction was right!

A moment later, someone actually knocked the door again.

This time, it was a different guy. The leading person at the door did not look ordinary. He was steady and cool. His words sounded confident and he was skillful in negotiations.

Ye Chong stayed quiet the whole time. Let the big guy do the talking, he thought.

Old Pang was also a professional in this. He acted ambiguously throughout the conversation. His desire was hidden, only to keep a back-way out if the conversation went wrong. Most importantly, he respected Ye Chong's opinion as he did not dare to even nod once since he could not see Ye Chong at the back. Briefly he responded the man.

Why would an old man respect a mere boy like Ye Chong?

In Old Pang's eyes, this cold boy was unidentifiable. His experience told him the lurking danger of the extreme in Ye Chong. So he would not recklessly make any kind of decision

without Ye Chong's approval, especially when they were in a new foreign world and everything felt like a gamble of life. He was still sane to not commit suicide.

The best stance is always being the observer!

Eventually the man left their residence.

They decided to scout the place first.

They walked in the street. To face a foreign surrounding, no doubt the first thing to do is always to identify and familiarize with it! No one showed disagreement on the decision!

Ye Chong was leading the group while Old Pang was on the left with Ka Sang the great wall on the right.

A group of buffed men in shirts of the same color came towards them in chuckles.

Chapter 111: Choice

The other party looked hostile, ready to surround him.

Old Pang had prepared for this. These people were obviously local ringleaders of some sort. One could find people like them almost everywhere. They must thought him to be someone worth wringing, and wanted to take a shot. He meaningfully looked to Ka Sang, and Ka Sang grinned in return, understanding him.

Old Pang planned to see what the gang was going to do next, but the chance never came.

He did not expect Ye Chong, standing beside him, to have such a huge disparity with others in understanding the ways of combat!

While he did not know the other party's goal, it was still obvious from their formation and attitude that they were not looking to have a round of tea with them!

Ye Chong's eyes shone brightly. He was not used to waiting for the other party to declare their intentions. The dangerous territory coupled with days of continuous battles had awakened his undiminished wild nature! It was as if he had returned to a world like the trash planet, where power reigned supreme!

These gang members were probably just like the mutants on the trash planet to Ye Chong. As he saw it, these unfriendly people were just like mutants unsheathing their claws and baring their teeth at him!

Why should he wait for the mutants to attack him first before retaliating?

Ye Chong was not so foolish!

After confirming their hostility, Ye Chong went straight at them.

He leaped, a shadow crossing the space and into the midst of the gang.

He greeted the leader with a kick, his swift leg solidly connecting against the leader's face! Crack, the chilling sound of bones broken, and a pit formed on the person's bloody face, as if pounded by a large hammer. He was flung backwards like a sandbag, tens of meters away, as his death was a certainty!

Everyone stared in shock!

Old Pang and Ka Sang stood in stupefaction!

Who ... Just who was this ruffian?

Ye Chong was like a tiger amongst sheep, his power unchallenged. He moved quickly, a blur of a figure moving amongst the gang, and his path was marked with howls of pain and bodies succumbing to death!

When Old Pang and Ka Sang recovered, the battle was already over! This was the first time the two of them saw Ye Chong's ruthless methods, and they were shocked! The weather was simmering hot, but cold sweat trickled uncontrollably down their temples!

Ye Chong did not mind them, but began to search the bodies of the gang members. Gathering spoils was the best part for every hunter, and Ye Chong was not an exception to this!

Old Pang and Ka Sang gathered their thoughts and rushed forward to help Ye Chong with the searching.

Whenever there were new arrivals, Haleyson's local gangs would send their lackeys ahead to scout for promising members or invite capable men and women onboard. As it was, the streets were lined with people with their own intentions. Ye Chong's performance was witnessed by many of them.

However, none of them dared to approach Ye Chong, but fled to their own respective bases to report their findings.

Soon, almost every influential gang knew the arrival of a certain killer in Hoth!

Old Pang felt terror creeping slowly into him. From his first move against the gang, up until now, he had not found even one survivor! All of them died from just a single move! Seeing Ye Chong's indifferent expression only made him feel frigid inside!

"Is this guy a butcher?"

Without asking for their intentions, or excuses, and without even knowing their background or offering a chance of conversation, the guy had murdered them all! "The b*stard's crazy!" thought Old Pang, raising his guard against Ye Chong!

A man like him was too dangerous! Who knew if he would suddenly attack him or Ka Sang?

After gathering their spoils, the three did not care for further exploration and returned to their place.

Back at home, a thorough inspection revealed that the spoils were quite valuable. There were at least fifteen identity cards, and 3 of them were for a stay exceeding 3 months. Old Pang was rejoiced to find them, since it means that they could now afford to request for a transfer from the Mentalist Sanctuary. After all, Haleyson was a place too complicated !

Of course, Ye Chong understood their concerns, and handed a card each to the two of them.

Old Pang did not expect Ye Chong's generosity and was, for the moment, stunned. Ka Sang was more straightforward, and did not think much of it as he gleefully accepted the identity card from Ye Chong.

With the card in hand, Old Pang declared anxiously, "Best if we all apply for a transfer now. I think the force behind that gang would definitely not leave us be. We should leave as soon as possible!"

Ka Sang nodded profusely on the side, in agreement with his big brother.

Ye Chong replied lightly, "You guys go ahead, I'd like to stay here for a while longer!"

Ye Chong's words were a surprise for Old Pang and Ka Sang. The latter asked frankly in his horror, "Why? This place is obviously damned, what's there to stay for?"

Ye Chong did not reply!

Old Pang pondered, silent for a long moment before speaking solemnly, "If you do not wish to leave, then we bid you farewell. Should we meet again some day, please don't hesitate to let us know if you're in trouble, I and Ka Sang will be most willing to help!"

Ka Sang's expression was one of uncertainty, but he managed to nod and announce loudly, "That's right! I, Ka Sang, will help you, even if it costs me my life!"

Old Pang could not help but glared a little at Ka Sang, and the man swiftly lowered his head!

"Then we're off. You take care, I hope we'll meet again!" Old Pang grabbed Ka Sang with him and left hastily amidst Ye Chong's silence.

Ye Chong watched the two of them left without a word!

In truth, Ye Chong had considered it before. Ever since he stepped into the outside world, he knew exactly how different he was from everyone else. It was only natural for others to not understand his methods. Ye Chong had tried to change his ways, but his habits were already an integral part of him, and whenever a situation arose, he often unconsciously resorted to his usual methods to handle the crisis.

Habits were not developed overnight. Similarly, habits developed from more than ten years could not be changed overnight.

Besides, he still did not know when he would have another episode of his odd condition. Ye Chong did not trust the two men

the way he would trust Mu and Shang.

He withdrew Shang. The mech was excited from finally coming out. "Heh, the weather's wonderful, the composition is very suitable for human breathing! Ye, you should've let me out sooner. Don't worry, I'll keep you safe and sound! Mm, while I'm slightly worse off than that crazy Mu, but compared to you I'm still very capable! Besides, with me by your side, hehe, you're going to enjoy life to the fullest! I, for one, am not as dull as that old hat ..."

Ye Chong ignored Shang's blabbering and continued with checking out the spoils.

He found nothing similar to any form of currency. "How could these people be so poor?" Ye Chong was baffled.

Shang laughed teasingly at him. "Ye, you can be a real fool sometimes. There's a 90 percent probability that the money is in the identity cards. See the number on the lower left corner of the cards? That should be the money digits!"

Ye Chong checked out the lower left corner of the cards as Shang suggested, and found the numbers. Each of the cards had a different number on them.

Shang's bionic eyes flashed wildly, obviously scanning the card.

"Hmm, Ye, see the slot at the bottom of the card? Fit the slots of 2 cards together. Yes, just like that, then configure one of the card's digits, and you can now transfer money from this card to the other! Tsk tsk, such crude technology. There's no identity restriction or authentication steps, this is really blood money!" Shang lamented!

For a mech to express such lamentations was more than a little odd.

Ye Chong, however, was used to it. Besides, Shang was right. There were no safeguards in place, a constant temptation for people. It was most likely that blood was spilt and lives lost in the

course of the money's passage from owner to owner!

Ye Chong transferred all the money to a single card, and the total came up to 6446. Ye Chong had no idea how much that was worth. "But, this came from more than a dozen identity cards, so it should be a good sum," Ye Chong muttered to himself.

"Huh?" Shang exclaimed out of the blue.

"What?" Not many things could surprise Shang, and Ye Chong was now curious. Shang may enjoy making a big fuss out of nothing, but Ye Chong had never seen him truly surprised by anything! In this respect, Shang and Mu were very much alike.

Shang's tone was serious, and Ye Chong, used to the mech's usual attitude could not help but thought it comical.

"Their technology is very advanced, the card's central design is reasonable, the encryption is also cutting-edge. Without entering the root of their system, I can't modify anything!" Shang explained solemnly.

Ye Chong asked, curious, "Why would you want to modify it?"

Shang's seriousness immediately turned to a light jeer, "Hmm, I'm just trying to see how much the money's worth! This money we have, what's it good for? It might not even be enough for a hot sexy battle, I've always wanted the real thing! Ye, we should discuss this, let's buy the latest hot sexy battle ..."

Ye Chong immediately broke into a sweat!

"Sidetracked, sidetracked!" Shang asked, embarrassed, "Hmm, where were we?"

Ye Chong was not sure if he should laugh or cry. "You said you couldn't modify the card!"

"Ah! Right!" Shang's tone as he remembered what he was talking about made Ye Chong feel very weird. Was it even possible for a PSI [1] to forget?

"Ye, have you ever wondered, if not even I can modify it, then their technology must be very advanced! But this advanced technology was not used to provide any authentication or safeguard for these identity cards! Isn't it curious?"

"You have a point!" Ye Chong agreed after a moment's thought.

"Moreover, how can the card's designer not think of this problem? It's impossible! That would mean that this lax security is deliberate! It also means that the local governing quarters intentionally allowed activities like stealing and robbing. If that's the case, then we have to think really carefully about the things going on around here!" Shang was now speaking like a wise person.

"You have a point! But, er, what does this have to do with us?" Ye Chong was confused.

Shang's wise demeanor immediately wilted. "I'd expected you to say something like that. Heavens, Ye, are you not the least bit excited? Don't you think there's a huge conspiracy in this place? Have you never thought of becoming a hero? ..."

Abruptly, Shang stood up straight, and said lowly, "Ye, we have a situation!"

Chapter 112: Another Episode

A large group of mechs and people armed with heat ray guns were moving towards them in a mighty formation. Pedestrians avoided the mob, scattering into hiding. From their practiced motions, it was obvious that this was not the first time something similar had happened.

Ye Chong immediately deployed Yu Di. The mob did not seem friendly, and Ye Chong was no fool, guessing that they were probably here for him. "Must be friends of the gang earlier today," thought Ye Chong!

He swiftly slipped into Yu Di's cabin and activated the scanning system. A swarm of red dots appeared before him. "They are a large group," Ye Chong muttered to himself.

Shang's toned turned dismissive. "Ye, you're capable enough to handle them yourself. The threat level is not high enough, I can't help you. Ah, such a pity! It's been so long since my last battle!" A touch of regret was apparent in his words.

"Alone it is!" Unless the situation demanded it, Shang would not interfere. While he did not fully understand the reason, Ye Chong also did not intend to rely on them too much! Being too dependent on them would rapidly reduce his combat skills! His own strength was more reliable than someone else's!

In such a complicated neighbourhood, passivity and retaliation after the enemies made their move would only spell death! If battle was inevitable, it was best to make the first move.

Qu Fa sat in his beloved mech, watching his lackeys move quickly and orderly towards the target. Once they circled him, the opponent will not escape their grasp. To face against these three men, he had deployed even his precious small team of mechs. These mech pilots were all with at least intermediate piloting skills. Apart from that, the 3 team leaders were all reputed as

expert level pilots.

Qu Fa was cautious in nature. He had always behaved warily, and had never used his small team of mechs, its presence merely in anticipation of grave situations!

While many members of the Orbit Syndicate were skillful due to strict membership qualifications, competition within the Syndicate was still rife. Who was someone as insignificant as him to claim the title of an expert mech pilot? The 3 team leaders under him were hired after much relentless persuasion. He was not particularly inclined to recall those days!

In all honesty, this open conflict in the current sensitive period was not something the careful Qu Fa was willing to initiate.

However, more than a dozen of his members were murdered in the streets today. If he did not make a show of power, then he would quickly lose his place in the syndicate, and there would probably no more lackeys with him by tomorrow! On Haleyson, survival was difficult without some support. A weak organisation would also be quick to disperse!

Suddenly, a loud BANG was heard. Brick debris sprayed out in all directions. The small house was immediately swallowed by a swirl of yellow dust.

Qu Fa was startled. The circling formation was not yet formed, and yet the opponent had noticed them. They seemed to be quite wary. It looked like the battle today would inevitably be a hard one! Fortunately, there were only three of his enemies. No matter how capable they may be, they will surely falter from being outnumbered! For now, Qu Fa could only hope that the other organisations would not interfere with the battle, or he would be in real trouble!

A black mech emerged from the dusty clouds, unperturbed by the situation! "It looks like they're underestimating us," Qu Fa thought to himself, laughing despite his rage. In fact, he was wrong about

Ye Chong, for Ye Chong was not prone to underestimating his opponents, no matter how weak they seem to be. As for his current entrance, it was most likely a suggestion from Shang to create a psychological pressure on the enemies.

Before Qu Fa could give the orders, the four-limbed black mech moved.

After so many days, Ye Chong had grown quite familiar with Yu Di. In Fred's eyes, Yu Di was not exactly a mech of the highest grade. The 4 limbs may look many, but for the average pilot, they were excessive. After all, how many pilots could move their hands as fast as Ye Chong? However, it was as though the mech was designed specially for him. His impressive hand speed had always been restricted by the mechs he used. With Yu Di, Ye Chong's hard work in improving his hand speed was finally paying off!

With time and effort, what could Ye Chong and Yu Di's combination be capable of?

Ye Chong had no intention of questioning his enemies. Yu Di moved like a huge octopus, lunging ahead. Before anyone could react, he was already at the edge of the mob's formation.

In the blink of an eye, Yu Di had already counted the enemies, a total of 37 mechs. They were all above average, but Ye Chong had grown used to mechs of this level, no longer surprised by them. The only mechs that could interest him now were the Black Cove mechs, MPA's internal mechs and, perhaps, the few mechs by Fred the Great that he left behind.

Shang was howling excitedly in Ye Chong's mind.

Yu Di did not make any feints, but rushed straight towards the mechs.

Ye Chong's first opponent was a Skyway-III model. It looked like a wolf, and was an expert level mech. Its 4 mechanical limbs were obviously modified, looking menacing! Yu Di's lunge did not faze

the mech, as its concealed gun chambers opened up, and the firepower was aimed towards Ye Chong with full force.

However, with his experience with the MPA's nanowave guns, this level of shooting attacks were like fireworks to Ye Chong, pretty and without substance. SHING! His shield, ready before his chest, expanded to meet the assault. The beast's eyes instantly lit up like fire.

Skyway's pilot did not expect his attack to be blocked at such a short distance. Before he could escape, he suddenly heard a buzzing sound from his mech. In his confusion, a violent explosion engulfed him ruthlessly like a beastly flood!

Ye Chong moved fast. He shielded himself with the shield and the UF magnetic sword. The sword was like a lurking viper, ready to deliver the fatal blow. Ye Chong was reluctant to use his grenade launcher, since the grenades were limited. If he finished the ammunition, the grenade launcher will be useless! Without Fred the Great with him, there was nowhere for him to replenish the curious grenades. Each one of them was unique! Ye Chong did not feel like wasting these precious resources in the current battle.

The thirty over mechs were mostly long range mechs.

It was definitely a nightmare for the long range mechs to be so close to a close range mech! Besides, no matter if they were long or close range mechs, being close to Ye Chong's Yu Di was the mother of all nightmares!

Yu Di was like a meat grinder. Everywhere it went, mechs scattered in pieces, their parts flying off. The sound of mechs exploding did not subside.

Qu Fa's face twisted with pain and suffering. All his hard-earned fruits of labour were gone!

Qu Fa's death was unremarkable, garnering little attention, since he only represented a small gang from Hoth. However, the battle

had won Ye Chong an enormous reputation! No matter how small the organisation was, it was still an amazing feat to defeat one single-handed!

Ye Chong was ruthless, and no one was expected to survive from his attacks. Besides, he showed impressive battle skills, and had an odd but frightening mech!

Ye Chong's merciless methods were the cause of hesitation for many linchpins. He would be an ideal murdering tool for them if appropriately handled. However, with any misstep, he could be trouble, with a blade to their necks!

Many of these gangs had extended their olive branches to Ye Chong, but Ye Chong did not respond to any of them! He did not wish to live a restricted life, as a weapon in another person's hands. Had he thought otherwise, which of these organizations could be more powerful than Black Cove?

Ye Chong was finally left alone. Understanding that Ye Chong did not plan to join any of the gangs, most of them were relieved, since this was an acceptable outcome for them!

Ye Chong walked leisurely on the streets. He was planning to familiarize himself with the local environment, but was interrupted last time. Now, he could finally take on the task!

The people on the streets all avoided Ye Chong. His infamous "killer" reputation in Hoth was unchallenged. He was described as being cold and merciless, a bloodthirsty murderer. Overnight, Ye Chong was smothered with the image of a butcher! Ye Chong did not mind it. Given the situation, it was more useful to be intimidating to others!

Without any interference, Ye Chong walked casually down the streets by himself, Shang in his alternate dimension. On the streets, a single-armed mech trailing him would be a sore sight. Besides, Ye Chong felt that Shang would better serve as a secret weapon. He was also feeling physically well recently, and this was

just a stroll, as there should be no complications! Such were Ye Chong's thoughts.

Ye Chong did not recognise the trees by the streets, and naturally did not know their names, but that did not stop him from taking a liking towards the flora!

Ye Chong examined the buildings that lined the streets on both sides as he strolled aimlessly around the neighborhood.

"Huh!" Ye Chong could not help but exclaim, seeing the strange architecture before him. A light green house, tinged with nature's graces. The design kindled calm and peace within Ye Chong.

A faint and mysterious fragrance made Ye Chong's nose a little itchy, and he suddenly found himself stepping onto the short wooden steps before the house.

Just as his right leg landed onto the steps, Ye Chong suddenly felt his mind shuttered, and was immediately alerted. He tried to reach out for Shang, but found his senses completely isolated from the mech! "This is not happening." Ye Chong felt helpless!

Soon, Ye Chong did not even have time to dwell on his helplessness, as a mind-piercing pain engulfed him like a tsunami wave!

Chapter 113: Ye, Free Tonight?

"Ye, free tonight?" Her voice swirled throughout the room like the breeze of a winter morning, as she stood sternly behind Ye Chong. Rui Bing seriously wondered on what world Ye Chong had been occupying himself with for the past 3 days at the modification room.

The skeleton pieces glossed in brilliant whites on Ye Chong's hands and there scattered also countless similar pieces inside the case resting before him. That one chunk of bone of his inventory seemed to have been changed into a shower of snowflakes, their surface was extremely smooth, the striations were exuding luxury and beauty.

"Nope." A standard reply from Ye Chong the concise speaker, as his eyes remained glued on the apparatus, not even a second was spared to shift his sight on his beloved. It was as if the apparatus was the rightful mistress of the house, and Rui Bing was certainly becoming a green-eyed monster, desiring that one occasion that she was allowed to smash the distracting machines. But really, Ye Chong's indifference was the real cause of her envy.

Wait, what am I thinking?

Rui Bing breathed. Once... deeply... out... Twice... deeply... out... She realized that spark of emotion she almost initiated, as she quickly regained her calmness.

Sigh it looked like my training hasn't been really effective. I'm losing my steadiness. Did I seriously lose control of my temper over trivial things like this just now?

Ye Chong seemed to be unaware of Rui Bing's strange behavior. The period before three days ago, they were still having combat training together, like a kind husband doing things for his wife's greatest hobby. Ye Chong accompanied her training and thanks to this hobby they shared time being together. Rui Bing, though her

mouth remained zipped, fully appreciated, even treasured the time she had with Ye Chong all alone.

Nevertheless, "Umm... Rui Bing, if you would excuse me..." Three days ago, Ye Chong, came like a winter storm, suggested to pause the combat training. A request it was from him. Rui Bing, with a heavy heart, still gestured her acceptance towards his request without hesitation. And that was when Ye Chong sank into the modification room, and never got out ever since. Rui Bing spent the next three days carrying meals to Ye Chong by hands, as wordlessly as Ye Chong on his desk. She would watch - with a stare of warmth and longing - this man pause the clinking on this desk, began chomping the meals she made silently then turn his chair back onto his work.

She did expected this happening from this man, since not only he was a pilot, but also a martial arts practitioner, as well as a skeleton artisan. Well probably the boy got a new idea on his toy? Rui Bing thought as she looked at Ye Chong completely indulged in his research.

Her eyes were seemingly mesmerized, as the charm of the man in work wafted through her senses.

But no! I'm not giving up! Not today!

"How about a day with me, and not the machine?" Rui Bing's voice rang cold.

"Nope." Ye Chong's head remained low above the skeleton pieces. His eyes lustrously gazed at the piece in his hand, so lustrous that Rui Bing once wished she was that piece instead.

Hmph. But she needed to be persistent. Perseverance is the quality of a typical martial arts practitioner! And Rui Bing had already overcome the Jie experts in her field! So she would have far greater perseverance on this!

"It's just one day." Rui Bing who broke her white flag, repeated,

"How about it?" Her frozen face demonstrated no expression, in which her clear eyes reflected one hint of gentle expectation.

Meanwhile Ye Chong had already started drilling these pieces. Rui Bing felt defeated when she had no idea what her man was doing, especially on why he must drill those thin pieces. Practically her comprehension on mech development was nearly zero, although with great efforts she had been trying to catch up with her man's expertise. For a layman like her it would take time and for people like her, her talent could never beat that monstrous man of hers.

"Really? Nope?" Tilting her head in disbelief, the slight curve her lips made was depicting tiny mischiefs in her head.

"After the work, at least." Ye Chong's head stayed associated with the bone pieces. Drilling is what shows an artisan's craftsmanship alright? It demands a pair of firm hands that could withstand the mini quakes steadily, with great concentration, or your hands could be getting new pores anytime. Moreover those bone pieces were harder than they looked, one could tell so with that lasting cry of drills on one single piece, yet Ye Chong, was all determined drilling holes in them.

"No, after my time, at least." Her words came light like her dancing blouse as she spread her legs across the ground, into position, she slid like a graceful swam, eyeing that culprit of her disrupted relationship - that snow white bone piece!

Ye Chong did not lose his sense of alertness despite being fully committed to his work. But he insisted on drilling, the bone piece would be going into the bin if he were to stop in the middle.

Helplessly his hands stoned with the vibration of the driller, as he made a strange twist with his lower body. One leg supporting his entire weight, as he sprang up from his seat with the other and performed an epic kick. Ye Chong already gained full control over every piece of his muscle, skillfully too. So the epic kick was

merely simple as his usual soccer kick.

Okay, he's good.

Rui Bing could not help but compliment Ye Chong's adaptability even under such circumstance. But it was not good enough! She had done enough training with Ye Chong that she knew his tricks way better than anybody else, as she gently tipped the ground and span in heavy afterimages, one diagonal slid to Ye Chong's side and her hands rapidly rose over Ye Chong's piece.

One would sympathize with Ye Chong because his hands were technically immobilized because of his quality assurance and the piece. He was feeling real troubled but he got to act. His springing leg immediately withdrew support of its bones as springy it became and whipped upon Rui Bing.

Heh!

Rui Bing's raised the corners of her lips, expressing the predictability of Ye Chong's moves, she made a fancy turn and swung to the other side. Her sleeves were grooving by the gale she created, it felt as if an angel joining a carol on the world under her feet.

The drilling process was finally going to be completed. Ye Chong sighed a relief, his eyes glared at the fair white skeleton piece, that he forgot Rui Bing's raid.

Rui Bing could hear something snapping in her head as she saw her man still remaining in his position five minutes ago. Ye Chong was lucky that she had very gentle temperament. Still! Her right hand seized that piece from Ye Chong's hand.

Ye Chong's right hand was holding the bone piece. The driller was getting through, he was feeling relieved but he saw one hand, with texture smoother and fairer than the bone piece, reaching towards him. He was not on his guard and he did not react on time as his right hand tilted and touched the driller!

Droplets of hemoglobin fluttered throughout the silent space.

His brows tightened as he saw one droplet of his vitality fell onto the sliced bone, which was then fully absorbed, remained as a dark red spot on the surface, like sand absorbing the water upon contact.

"Ah!" Rui Bing shrieked and quickly grabbed that bleeding hand of Ye Chong. She placed the hand into her mouth and began sucking them sympathetically. Her frozen face shattered as regrets and guilt stirred on her pale expression. She licked the bleeding fingers and felt her heart was aching the same degree as Ye Chong.

I'm... I'm sorry...

"Stop messing around." Said Ye Chong as his eyes glanced upon the remaining bone pieces in the case, withdrawing his fingers from the salivating cavity of hers. "Alright?" He returned to his work as normal.

No... I'm not.

Rui Bing looked at Ye Chong being bewitched by his work again, as tears rolled off her cheeks.

It's... It's... Do you know what day is today?

Rui Bing tried to word her feeling but something felt like choking her. She carried on watching Ye Chong, all quiet, dead quiet, letting her feelings stream through her cheeks.

An hour lapsed, that it felt like forever. Rui Bing stood behind Ye Chong, her eyes remained on Ye Chong, and Ye Chong was senseless enough to continue working vigorously.

She bit her lips, turned away and walked.

Ye Chong rose from his seat, breathing in the greatest relief all readers could ever imagine, that even Rui Bing could hear it right next to the door. Then she heard the clinking, a different clinking this time, a clinking of conclusion, which haunted her and seized

her moving step towards outside.

Ye Chong then turned to his back and flinched upon seeing Rui Bing, "You're still here?"

"Mhm. Nothing." She responded, her back remaining faced to Ye Chong.

"Well. Here." The flat tone ringing some keyword caused her to turn back to Ye Chong instantly, "Merry Christmas."

It was the case! The same case Ye Chong had been working on forever and ever and ever! Rui Bing tightened her lips as her shaking hands opened the case slowly.

Hah... I ...

Her tears overflowed.

It was a pair of knuckles, fairer than the powder snow, livelier than the festive itself, made out of pure skeletons, resting in the case obediently. One piece of the knuckles' armor was tainted by a faded crimson spot.

Once again, her sight was blurry as wetted, not by her sadness but a joy of being loved.

Chapter 114: Mentalist Jia Zhuo

Suddenly, a wave of gentleness and peace overcame Ye Chong. It felt chilly, like being soaked in icy waters, but the pain throughout his body was relieved to a certain degree. Even though it still hurt to the bones, the pain was now at a more manageable level for Ye Chong.

At the very least, Ye Chong could focus on comprehending his current situation!

The episode this time lasted longer than the last one. As the pain gradually dwindled into nonexistence, Ye Chong was already soaked in sweat, akin to being fresh out of the shower. Ye Chong's face was devoid of color. He stood up trembling, not deploying Shang immediately, merely sending a mental reassurance to the anxiously waiting mech. He was back to his normal self, only that the sweating had slightly weakened his body.

A middle-aged man came to him, his jaunty profile lit with a little smile, dressed in a light green robe. His physique screamed frailty to Ye Chong!

The man spoke first, "You collapsed before my doorway. Seeing as you were in trouble, I had moved you into my house. Please forgive my insolence!" His voice was unhurried, with a calming effect.

Ye Chong noticed then that he was indoors, and thanked the man, "You have my thanks for saving me, mister!"

The middle-aged man smiled, "It's nothing much, don't worry about it! I am Jia Zhuo. Relax, this place is safe. Your injuries were quite serious, please have a seat and rest!"

"Thank you!" Ye Chong sat down as suggested. As he sat, he noticed his muscles, sore from the episode. "It really is more serious than last time," thought Ye Chong to himself.

Jia Zhuo offered an unfamiliar cup of verdant green liquid to Ye Chong. He said courteously, "Please enjoy!" and waved with his arm by way of inviting him to try it.

"Okay!" Ye Chong took the cup and finished it in one go. The bright, verdant Six-Inch Green was bland with a light tinge of bitterness, and tasted like water in Ye Chong's mouth. Ye Chong did not suspect the Six-Inch Green to be harmful to himself. After all that had happened, if the other party was hostile to him, he would not be able to defend himself.

Beside, Ye Chong was quite certain that this man was one of the mysterious mentalists of the Orbits.

Seeing Ye Chong's manner of finishing his drink, Jia Zhuo laughed demurely. "You must be from Haleyson!" Ye Chong's confusion was obvious, and Jia Zhuo explained, "This is the most common drink found in Haleyson. People usually drink it in small sips to appreciate its flavor. Those who drink them in huge gulps are usually newcomers. It tastes like water if you drink it that way!"

Ye Chong understood then, and concisely said, "It's good!"

Jia Zhuo apparently noticed his guest's difficulty with words, and so he asked, "So, you quite suddenly collapsed just now, what happened?"

Ye Chong was quiet for a moment before replying, "I have a strange illness!" While he did not know how the mentalist was able to relieve his pain, if he could learn how to do it himself, it might be able to cure him of the poison from Black Cove's silver liquid, or at least reduce the pain.

Ye Chong had a quick discussion with Shang in his mind.

Shang said, "Ah, Ye, this guy here might be able to help you!"

"Mm, I know that!"

"Then let's tie him up and interrogate him! How's that?" Shang

bared his evil mischief.

"Mm, will he speak under interrogation?" Ye Chong was not confident with the method.

"Hehe, Ye, don't you worry. I have 756 interrogation strategies stored in my database, of which 177 of them do not require any tools. Psychology is my specialty! Hehe, I can even make him spill everything about his previous life, and the life before that [1]!" Shang, with his devil's tail in full view, did not forget to quote a familiar script from the movies!

"First, we have to get him under our control!" Ye Chong began to consider the possibilities, and said, "But I've heard that mentalists are strong, what if I killed him? We know too little about mentalists!"

"You're right!" Shang sounded a little dejected. "Unfortunately, I can't help you with that, or we would have definitely captured him alive!"

"Mu once talked about the principle of equal trading. Since he helped me earlier, it doesn't seem ... appropriate! To treat him like this!" Ye Chong did not fully understand Mu's explanation of the principle, and was now uncertain of himself.

"Ah, right, how could I forget! Ye, it's because you didn't remind me earlier that a kind PSI like me nearly committed a grave mistake! Mm, to repay a debt is seventh on the list of criteria to be a real man. The seventh, a very important criteria ..." Shang spoke emptily, and discreetly hid his devil's tail out of sight.

Poor Jia Zhuo was not aware that he had dangerously grazed past the fate of a living hell.

As Ye Chong mentioned his condition, Jia Zhuo grew interested, "Oh, a strange illness? What are the symptoms? What's the cause?"

"The episodes come irregularly, the symptom is pain, the cause is unknown!" Ye Chong's mechanical way of answering invited a look

of disdain from Shang. While Ye Chong knew his condition was due to the silver liquid, he felt it inappropriate to mention it, and so had left it out.

Ye Chong's answer was too plain, and Jia Zhuo knitted his brows despite himself. "Mm, are there any other peculiarities?"

Ye Chong vividly recalled his experience. "Mm, it felt like my mind was suffering. This time, even the muscles were sore. Also, my brainwaves were blocked, and I couldn't link with any brainwave-driven mechanisms, such as mechs!"

"Oh! There's such a thing!" Jia Zhuo was clearly surprised by the symptoms. He frowned for a long while before sighing and speaking apologetically, "Ah, my apologies. I'm not a professional doctor. I'm not familiar with the symptoms."

"Okay!" Ye Chong asked abruptly, "Are you a mentalist?"

Jia Zhuo paused, before smiling in reply, "Yes! I'm a mentalist!"

Ye Chong asked, "The chilly feeling in my head, was that you?"

"You mean this?" Jia Zhuo did not move, but Ye Chong could feel the chill spreading in his brain, just like when he was having an episode; this time he was conscious, and the feeling was more obvious, as though his brain was thoroughly cleansed with spring water, and it felt soothing.

Ye Chong was startled, as anyone would when something appeared out of the blue in their mind. He asked curiously, "How did you do that?"

Jia Zhuo laughed a little. This was not the first time he was asked with that question.

Mentalists were, in fact, mental strength practitioners. Through vigorous training of one's mental consciousness, the potential of one's physical body could be enhanced. That was why they often had skills unique to them. Unlike Black Cove's emphasis on physical strength, they were a strong force in a different aspect! Jia

Zhuo's demonstration was only the most basic and common application of a mentalist's skills, used for calming a person's mind, called Mind Cleansing.

Ye Chong, who had never experienced anything like it, was understandably startled.

As he was reminded of his conversation with Hak about the origin of mech pilots and the 3 main schools of pilots, he could not help but ask, "Secret arts practitioner?"

Jia Zhuo was surprised. "So you know about them too. Haha, it's not really much of a secret. Secret arts practitioners are the forefathers of mentalists. Back then, the secret arts practitioners split into two. Those who did purely mental training became mentalists, like me; the others are called mentalist pilots, mech pilots who undergo mental training."

"Mentalist pilots!" It was a new term for Ye Chong. He imagined how a mech pilot with special mental powers could fight in a battle. What would it be like? Ye Chong was moved by the thought.

"Haha, mentalist pilots are not well known. They usually dwell in mentalist sanctuaries, rarely going out." Jia Zhuo noticed Ye Chong's bafflement and explained.

"Hmm, I don't know what to make of your illness, but you can try your luck in Zeuth zone. There're many strange characters there, you might gain something unexpected!" Jia Zhuo went to his table and wrote something on a piece of paper. He then passed the paper to Ye Chong. "These are the addresses of some capable doctors whom I personally know. You can try them, but they're mostly eccentric, and may make queer requests of you, so watch out! Even if they fail, do not worry. The area is full of capable people, so long as you search patiently, it is highly likely that you'll meet a doctor who can help you."

Ye Chong accepted the paper with gratitude. "Thank you!"

Jia Zhuo smiled warmly and waved his hand in dismissal. "It's nothing, I can't help you much! It's all up to you!"

Abruptly, Ye Chong asked, "Mm, can you teach me Mind Cleansing? I'll trade you for something!"

Jia Zhuo smiled apologetically. "While Mind Cleansing is the simplest of mental power application, it's still difficult to learn! Beside, without the mentalist sanctuary's approval, I can't teach it to anyone!"

Ye Chong replied with an "Okay."

Shang complained in Ye Chong's mind, "I should've known. We should've just tie him up and interrogate! I believe he will speak!" Silence fell for a few seconds. He then excitedly said, "Ye, I've got a good plan!"

"What plan?" Ye Chong asked curiously.

"Hehe, this guy's nice to you, best not to make our move! But there must be more than one mentalist around here, hehe, if we're to capture another mentalist, then it's not a violation to the principle of equal trading!" Shang instigated.

"Hmm, that makes sense!"

"Right? Of course my plans make sense! I'm not as dull as that fool, Mu. Hehe, a mentalist pilot, must be fun!" A certain devil's tail began to wag in excitement!

Ye Chong bid farewell to Jia Zhuo, and asked about whether there were any mentalist sanctuaries in Zeuth.

Jia Zhuo thought Ye Chong was interested in becoming a mentalist, and pointed out the location of the mentalist sanctuary in the Zeuth zone enthusiastically. He even told Ye Chong the addresses of a few capable mentalists, suggesting that Ye Chong could visit them for lessons in mentalism when he had time!

Chapter 115: Kidnapping

"You sure we're heading in the right direction?" Ye Chong asked.

"Er, who knows?" Shang replied irresponsibly.

Ye Chong smiled wryly as he scanned the unfamiliar environment. From one unfamiliar environment to another, Ye Chong did not feel any difference between any of them. However, as he was reminded that Shang had no map for the area, the result of the mech's directions was only to be expected.

Zeuth was more organised than Hoth, the pedestrians all calm and leisurely strolling about. In Ye Chong's time in the zone, he had not seen any fights on the streets. In Hoth, it would have been impossible to avoid.

Vintage brick buildings could be seen in every corner of the zone, in great variety. Most of the buildings were not tall, unlike in Hoth, where brick buildings that reached a few tens of meters tall were still considered average, and looked more like warehouses.

The streets were lined with shops on both sides; technology from outside the Orbits could occasionally be seen. It seemed that the Orbits were not as isolated from the outside world as it was rumored to be.

Most of the shops were mech related. Unlike Ye Chong's experience of online purchasing via Fal's virtual net, where the products were delivered to the buyers, the local community seemed to reject this convenient and advanced method of purchase. On the contrary, they practiced the old ways of purchasing on the spot. Mechs were openly displayed in the shops, where one could choose in their own time, and even request for a test drive.

Mainstream models in the Five Galaxies were rare, and Ye Chong was unfamiliar with most of the models on display. This greatly

interested him. The mechs here were unlike any he had seen before!

However, under Shang's hastening, Ye Chong reluctantly tore himself away from the goods.

"Ask for directions?" Ye Chong asked.

"Of course, what else can you do if you're lost? You have a better idea?" Shang mocked.

"No!" Ye Chong was clear cut in his answer.

"Eh, Ye, look 30 degrees to your left! Wow, look at that body! She even had a mask on! Hehe, I won't be stopped by just a mask!" Ye Chong knew from his tone that Shang was growing enthusiastic.

Ye Chong shifted his vision 30 degrees to the left.

"What's there to see?" Ye Chong muttered to himself. The person was wrapped in a long purple robe, with a face mask on. Only her subtly graceful movements hinted at her gender.

"What would you know?" Shang spoke scornfully. "Any top class beauty would shine with a special charisma, with an unmistakable quality! Ah, these words are wasted on you! Let me scan her a bit first!"

"Hmm, shine with a special charisma? Does he mean aura? Isn't that what powerful people have? Could all top class beauties be powerful?" Ye Chong was deep in thought.

"Cough*cough*" Shang's scanning was disrupted by Ye Chong's thoughts. "Er, Ye, your imagination is actually quite impressive!"

Ye Chong was baffled, but he knew that something was wrong with his thoughts.

"Huh! Isn't that Feng Su?" Shang was surprised. "How could she be here?"

"Who's Feng Su?"

"Heavens! Ye, do you not know Feng Su? What a sad, sad life you have. Feng Su is Fal's most popular female superstar! Also the female artist with the highest worth! Tsk tsk, I myself am her number one fan. Back in the days, her one song managed to silence the spectators for a whole 15 minutes. It was unheard of! What? Ye, you weren't aware? As expected, Mu's influence had turned you into a wild animal, what a sore sight! Looks like the burden of transforming you into a true human has fallen to me! Hehe ..."

Shang chattered on.

Ye Chong knew that once Shang went into a mood, he would not let up for a good while.

Shang suddenly spoke in a dramatic fashion, "Ye, aren't we asking for directions? Go ask her! Hehe, Ye, this is a golden opportunity I've created for you! Ah, too bad there are no photon processors around, or I'll show you how beautiful she really is, and you'll definitely fall in love with her! She's the dream girl of a great many young men! Hehe, I have her exact measurements here from my scans. These is first hand information, infinitely better than whatever you read on the virtual net!" Shang spoke like one bewitched.

Ye Chong, however, was indifferent. "Not interested! Why should I ask her? Besides, the fact that she's a superstar and appearing here all alone is very suspicious, don't you think? There must be a story behind it!"

Shang was shocked. "Ye, you're getting smarter! Hmm, you're right, it is suspicious. Why would she be here of all places? No wonder she's trying to be inconspicuous! Ah, Ye, there must be something behind this, so we should definitely look into it. We might even stumble upon some exclusive story!"

"Shang, is it worth it to waste our time on this? We have more important things to do!" Ye Chong was unimpressed.

Shang could not help but grumble, "It's just asking for directions,

how long can that take?"

Ye Chong gave it a thought before approaching Feng Su. "Good day to you, do you know how I can reach Street 22?" Ye Chong asked the masked woman, the one called Feng Su.

Feng Su turned around and gave a measuring glance at him. She found him looking relaxed, but with an undisguisable apathy behind it.

Feng Su spoke with her demure, enchanting voice, "Oh, Street 22, just go straight ahead and turn right at the third intersection, you'll reach the street after a five-minute walk!" Her short dialogue lingered in the air, the voice gentle and lovely, tugging at one's heartstrings!

The accurate control of her voice and tonality was a surprise for Ye Chong. He staggered a little before gathering himself for a reply, "Oh, thank you!" and turning to leave.

"I hope you're satisfied, Shang!" While Ye Chong did not understand this indulgence of Shang's, he would still do his best to fulfill the mech's wishes! However, Shang did not speak for a long while.

"Shang, what's up?" Ye Chong thought curiously. Could the mech's sound receiver be damaged? Surely not.

"Wow, that was awesome! A voice from Heaven! From Heaven itself! Heavens, to hear such a moving voice in this mortal realm! Ye, do you not feel it?" Shang was high as a kite!

"Mm, it was alright!" Ye Chong replied lightly.

"Hey, Ye, let's invite her for a chat. This opportunity is only found once in a century, no, once in a millennium! Ye, let's talk to her again, yes? Just once more!" Shang begged.

Ye Chong was unmoved. "We're going to Street 22!"

Shang understood Ye Chong's temperament, and grumbled,

"Sigh, you've never seen her holographic image, or you would fallen head over heels for her! Er, but ... That may not be the case too, since your requirements are different from the average man! Ha, I know, Ye, surely you must be secretly in love with that lady in the white training garb?"

"No!" Ye Chong objected, but the image of a white figure came unconsciously to mind. He could almost smell that mysterious fragrance, and taste the smoothness under his tongue. Suddenly, he felt a pressure rising in his chest, and Ye Chong quickly suppressed his thoughts until the pressure eventually subsided.

"Haha, Ye, that must be it, you can't hide it from me, your brain activity just now was 30% more active than usual. Your pulse quickened, and your blood flow was faster! Hmm, I suppose that lady was also likeable. Too bad we can't return to Blue Ocean for now. After all, she had asked for you to marry her! But Ye, don't sacrifice an entire forest for that one tree [1]. Compared to Feng Su, that lady still has a lot to make up for! Hehe ..." Shang laughed discreetly to himself and teased Ye Chong.

Ye Chong rolled his eyes and followed Feng Su's directions to Street 22, leaving Shang to blabber on in his mind.

No. 103 on Street 22!

This was an address given by Jia Zhuo, where a masterful mentalist stayed, which was Ye Chong and Shang's destination! Ye Chong had expended great effort to find the place, since it was located far from the main streets, secluded within a piece of thinly forested area.

The low, vintage looking brick house had a roof that twisted upwards at the edges. There hanged a row of wind chimes that tinkled soothingly whenever a breeze swept through. The second floor's window was slightly opened, and not tightly shut. The house was surrounded by a forest. It was obvious that the mentalist was not very welcoming of visitors! This was a great

advantage for Ye Chong, enough to boost his confidence for what he was about to do next!

"Shang, any suggestions?" Ye Chong asked.

"Hmm, best if you make your move as fast as you can. We know too little about mentalists, who knows what weird tricks they have up their sleeves. He's now in the second floor, and unfortunately, the house is too small for me to enter, or I'll be able to give you a hand!" Shang was now in all seriousness, like a completely different person, or, more accurately speaking, a completely different PSI!

"Mm, you have a point!" Ye Chong agreed. Mentalists were a mysterious factor. Even Jia Zhuo's Mind Cleansing was something incomprehensible to Ye Chong. He was thus extremely cautious of them!

"Er, also, usually robbers wear a black cloth over their face, to avoid recognition!" Shang reminded him.

"There's something like that? Where'd you heard it from?" Ye Chong was curious.

"The movies of course, that's how all the robbers do it!" Shang spoke matter-of-factly.

Ye Chong could not find any black cloth, but fortunately he had kept the F-58 mask from Black Cove in his bag. He put on the mask, and felt that it was more practical than whatever black cloth there was. It had been some time since he last wore the mask. Ye Chong caressed the black mask on his face, overwhelmed with emotions.

"You brought that thing?" Shang reminded him.

"Yes!" Ye Chong gave a shake with his wrist.

Ye Chong moved deftly like a raccoon, entering the second floor. Shang laid in wait in the forest outside as his backup.

The wind chimes hung along the eaves tinkled, masking the

sound of Ye Chong's approach.

Ye Chong gave a sweeping glance of the second floor. With the exception of some basic wooden desks and chairs, there were not many other decorations in sight. The entire floorboard was made of wood. Ye Chong had no time to dwell on the mountainous expenses required for the floorboard, but took great care in avoiding any creaking sounds from his steps.

The entire second floor had only one room, but the door was shut tight. The man must be in there!

"Who dares to invade my house!" A shady voice rang in Ye Chong's mind, just as the door creaked open by itself, revealing an elderly with an overcast expression, staring at Ye Chong with glowing eyes. His curiously glinting eyes startled Ye Chong!

When Ye Chong heard the old man's voice, he knew he was in trouble. As the door opened into a slit, he saw an old man sitting inside, facing him.

Before Ye Chong could react, he felt his body leadened into a deadweight, and his vision blurred. Under the unexpected attack, Ye Chong instinctively reacted and whipped his hands out!

That movement took all his energy, and Ye Chong could no longer defend against the restrictive force that bound him. Crash! He felt into a heap on the floor. The world was spinning in his eyes, halos of light swirling around, putting him into a daze.

Another crash was heard, and Ye Chong could hear an old man's surprised yelling.

He immediately felt the weight lifted, and the binding force on him vanished! After a few minutes, Ye Chong's vision returned to normal!

Ye Chong pulled himself off the ground with great effort, his muscles still trembling, cold sweat rolling down his spine.

The old man was wrapped up firmly like a dumpling, lying still

on the floor. He was, however, undeterred in yelling angrily in all seriousness, "Who are you?! I'm a mentalist, do you know what you're doing? Attacking a mentalist, you'll be hunted by the sanctuary to the ends of the world!" His tone changed immediately as he said, "I'm a reasonable man, if you need help, just let me go and we'll talk it through, I'll definitely help you! You should know that ..."

Ye Chong ignored the man as he flexed his limbs, glad of his freedom! Earlier, he had swung a weapon made of a string with weights on both ends towards the old man. It was Shang's idea. Once the weapon rotated from the swing, it would entangle anything it hit. Ye Chong was strong, and while the weights were not too heavy, his throw of the weapon towards the old man had his target firmly tied up! Once the attack was disrupted, Ye Chong regained his freedom!

What a powerful mentalist! If not for his quick reaction, he would have become a defenseless captive! Ye Chong recalled the encounter with delayed fear.

The old man had hawkish nose and eyes. His pupils glimmered as he continued yelling angrily.

Ye Chong had no intention of chatting him up. He lifted the old man and jumped out from the window with his prize. The interrogation part will be left to Shang!

Chapter 116: Meeting Again

Ye Chong carefully hid in a tree, keeping watch for Shang. The bouts of shrill cries from the trees behind him gave him the goosebumps. While he was used to matters of life and death, the pitiful cries still perturbed him greatly!

Ye Chong began examining his memories of the earlier encounter. The old man was able to detect his intrusion into the house. It was an impossible feat. If it was Ye Chong himself in the room, even his hearing could not filter the sounds of the tinkling wind chimes and detect the intrusion.

More frightening was the fact that Ye Chong was bound by the enemy without any chance of retaliation. That was a first for him! What he lost was not only his freedom of movement but also his sight!

It was too horrifying!

How did he attack? Ye Chong did not see the old man make any movements. It was truly baffling!

Suddenly, Ye Chong heard a soft shuffling sound. He gathered himself. Someone was here!

Ye Chong signalled in his mind to Shang to speed things up as he moved through the trees, agile like a mutant primate, in search of the old man's visitor! On the trash planet, Ye Chong had always made use of the intercrossing metal beams in the trash to evade attacks from pursuing mutants. The tree branches were more flexible than metal beams, and more resilient. Ye Chong skillfully made a turn in the trees, the thick canopy providing him cover.

Among the trees, the holographic scanning system's efficiency was impaired due to the complicated terrain. Even the most advanced scanning systems could no longer be completely reliable. On the contrary, human senses were more trustworthy! Of course,

when it came to Mu and Shang, Ye Chong was unsure of their limits!

If he had heard it right, the shuffling sound was moving towards the old man's house. It seemed that the house was the only one nearby.

Ye Chong carefully forged ahead.

A purple robed woman with a purple veil was walking along the route amongst the trees that led straight to the old man's house. The shuffling sound came from her steps on the fallen leaves.

Ye Chong was startled. Was this not the woman he had asked for directions earlier? Ye Chong immediately relayed this to Shang. The mech replied that he was almost done, as he was just now repeating his questions to gauge the reliability of the information from the old man.

Ye Chong followed Feng Su cautiously, countless thoughts going through his mind. "What is with this lady? Does she know the old man? Er, Jia Zhuo had called him Mr Yin. She's a superstar, why would she know a mentalist like Mr Yin?"

While Ye Chong was not familiar with the job description of a superstar, he believed that it was probably unlikely for the occupation to be related to mentalists! Besides, the fact that she was in the Orbits was also curious.

"However," Ye Chong thought, "it's got nothing to do with me, right? What I need to do is to buy time for Shang."

Feng Su was not walking too quickly, looking fragile. Ye Chong considered knocking her out to avoid any mishaps. As for killing Feng Su, Ye Chong might have even considered that if not for Shang. However, with Shang's fondness of Feng Su, Ye Chong did not feel like upsetting the mech with her death!

For Ye Chong, Mu and Shang were his best friends, the people he cared about most. In his heart, they were as alive as any human

being! They were the most precious lives to him!

"Hmm, best if I knock her out." Ye Chong was confident of controlling his strength!

Ye Chong approached Feng Su silently, ready to deliver a blow to her nape to knock her out!

Suddenly, Feng Su stopped moving and turned, speaking severely, "Who's that? Come out!" Her eyes looking towards the canopy where Ye Chong had hid himself.

Ye Chong was shocked. How did she found out? He did not make any sound at all!

Feng Su stepped a little wider, anticipating a fight, her hands in a battle-ready posture.

While he did not understand how Feng Su noticed him, Ye Chong held no fear against the women before him! To him, her physique was not match for his!

Feng Su glared coldly at the canopy to the left above. Someone was hiding there. Whoever it was, Feng Su was certain that they were hostile! Could they be some rapist, to follow her for so long before choosing to attack in this secluded area? Feng Su's eyes flashed with killer intent!

The canopy rustled, just a bit. Pheeww A headwind blew, as a figure in green shot out towards her in an astounding speed!

Feng Su humphed coldly, angled her body slightly and avoided the figure as she bowed her head and silently hooked her leg upward into a back kick! Bam! The green figure hit the ground, revealing itself to be an arm-thick branch with some leaves on it. The branch stuck deep into the soil, half of it beneath the ground!

A chilling breeze kissed her nape; from the strength, the other party was looking to knock her out. The thought stoked her killer intent even further! This kind of rapist could only blame himself for his inevitable death by her hands!

Ye Chong suddenly found himself missing his target, and knew something was wrong! Fortunately, his attack was only meant to knock her out, the blow not packing too much force. He leaped backwards in retreat, and avoided a kick from Feng Su by only a hair's breadth!

His successful retreat surprised Feng Su, her eyes turning serious. It seemed that she had underestimated her enemy's speed. This guy was not going to be easy to defeat!

However, Feng Su was confident of her skills! While the guy before her was definitely impressive to the average person, it would only take her slightly longer to claim victory!

Turning back to face her enemy, Feng Su had a clear view of the enemy for the first time!

Feng Su's eyes narrowed. "Black Cove's men?" The man before her was wearing a mask very familiar to her. She knew many things about Black Cove, and the mask with F-58 engraved on it could only mean that this was Number 58 of Team F!

Strange. If she remembered correctly, Team F was posted at the outermost ranges of Black Cove. Why would Black Cove send its weakest members to the Orbits? Would Black Cove not know about the Orbits? The thought was swiftly dismissed! Impossible! Black Cove and the Orbits knew each other well, how could such a clumsy mistake be made?

Could it be that there were more powerful members nearby? And this was only someone keeping watch? If that was the case, could the opponent's target be Mr Yin?

These thoughts flashed through her mind, and it seemed more and more plausible by the moment. Feng Su's killing intent raged! She must quickly disable this lookout to send out a distress call and rescue Mr Yin! Feng Su believed that if the one from Black Cove was not that particular person, she would stand a chance to help Mr Yin!

Ye Chong was experienced in life-deciding battles, and was sensitive to his opponent's killer intent. He felt her readiness to kill, and while he did not understand the change in intent, he was still fearless of the battle!

Feng Su was determined to end the battle quickly!

Ye Chong watched her closely, not underestimating her because of her gender. However, he did not initiate an attack, since his primary goal was to buy time!

Suddenly, a strange gleam flashed in Feng Su's eyes!

Ye Chong started. A mentalist! "To think that she's a mentalist," thought Ye Chong, as he decided to not hold back any further. He leapt to action, moving evasively like a flickering shadow, a blur of a figure, hoping to confuse the opponent's vision and avoid being targeted.

"Phew!" The expected feeling of being bound did not come, and Ye Chong exhaled in relief. It seemed that the plan worked!

While Ye Chong was rejoicing, he saw the woman lunge towards him!

Since he could now avoid the attack, Ye Chong grew more confident and aimed a punch towards the enemy!

Feng Su twisted her body and easily avoided Ye Chong's punch, closing in on him.

"Close-range combat?" Ye Chong analysed calmly.

Ye Chong had always preferred close-range combat. His robust reflexes and outstanding strength and speed could make up for his lack in battle techniques in close quarters!

Ye Chong dared not hold back now. He believed that if Shang had to decide, the mech would probably prefer to have him live than her! Besides, how could he die here?

Close-range combat was also vicious, without room to hold back,

for any movement could mean life or death!

The two engaged in tight combat, the stakes self-evident!

In the blink of an eye, Ye Chong's attacks changed from the force of hurricane storm to a barely manageable assault!

Ye Chong groaned on the inside. His opponent's movements seemed to be assisted by some sort of foresight. Whenever he was about to attack, she seemed to anticipate the blow, and Ye Chong had not even had grazed a blow against her since the battle began. On the contrary, the opponent's attacks were sharp and unavoidable. Despite Ye Chong's robust reflexes, he had received quite a few hits. If not for his sturdy build, he would probably be seriously injured!

The strangest part was, up till now, she had never taken a blow from Ye Chong. His every punch met with empty space, and that sense of a hollow attack was very dispiriting for him. He was more powerful and faster than her, but the attacks never landed!

Occasionally, his eyes met Feng Su's mysteriously gleaming eyes, and Ye Chong could not help but shiver in his mind.

Ye Chong figured that, with the way things were going, he would get more and more disadvantaged!

Abruptly, Ye Chong came to a sudden realization and felt like slapping himself. His goal was not to kill her, but to buy time! Ye Chong felt enlightened, but the momentary distraction earned him another fist and a kick!

Ye Chong quickly moved backwards in retreat. If he could widen the distance between them, his superior speed would allow him to avoid attacks more easily!

Feng Su followed him closely like a parasite, obviously realizing his intentions.

Chapter 117: The Scary Feline

The difference in speed was evident the moment they competed. Ye Chong was obviously leading. It was common sense to know that he possessed an absolute upper hand in velocity. He travelled so fast that he only flashed by like faint images in naked eyes. Feng Su was also such a blitz as it moved in afterimages, which however stayed incompetent when compared to Ye Chong's skills. The distance grew fast between them.

Well, a master Ye Chong sounded like, yet he was not actually having an easier time dealing with this woman. He planned to rush straight and make a few sudden turns to get rid of her. In spite of that, such trick did not seem to work as this peculiar woman, as if a feline in the jungle, always managed to follow his turnings immediately. It felt like her intuition was at the same frequency as Ye Chong's brain or she was aware of such crude tactic by Ye Chong, that she could even estimate the timing of turning and act accordingly in horrifying accuracy. Puzzling, puzzling indeed to Ye Chong.

It was getting spookier each time! No way!

Ye Chong was never alone. The opponent received the same shock as he did. "When did the Black Covers get this strong? A thrown-out grunt being this potent? Did we miss out something important on our observation? Why is there such a vast difference compared to the information we obtained?"

Feng Su's heart panicked as she raced on and began to discern the inhuman strength and abnormal level of dexterity in possession by the opponent. "That pace too..." A momentum she could hardly compete with - other than the severe lack of skills, it was amazing. With his potential, if he mastered the Black Covers' combating skills, he would bring disasters. No! In fact, he would be the disaster itself!

It only required a nod from the Black Coves, then he would be a great fighter in no time.

But how could the people from Black Coves miss such a brilliance? She was well aware of the forces behind the curtain, still she could not believe that they would make such a costly ignorance. She was shocked yet she was glad that apparently Number 58 did not learn that signature assaulting skill from his former organization, or she would be the busted one for the day. The skill was terrifying enough to make her hair stand by just imagining it.

The residents of the Orbits admitted to not the greatest force, but only to the wisest use of force.

The best outcome would only be achieved when the force was used in the wisest way. Certainly, the kind who held the greatest force in the galaxy would be none other than the pilots themselves. Nevertheless, it did not signify the insignificance of the other occupations like the fighters. The ones who combated brutally, no one would ever agree to the assumption that the fists of the fighters were no match to the iron walls of the mechs. A pilot would always be bound to the sequence of deploying a mech and entering the cabin after, and within that time frame, a skillful fighter could assault the pilot countless times before the corpse of the pilot rolled into the cabin.

So... Never look down on forces of any kind!

The afterimages of two phantoms lurked in the path of the forest, chasing each other.

"Jajaja!" Shang's voice rang in pride, "Ye, that old gramp had spat everything! Woohoo! We are on the jackpot! Mentalist sure is interesting! I had already emphasized the fact that I could make anyone spit with my techniques! But man... that old gramp had a spine missing in his body. You know what I'm saying! He only lasted 20 minutes before he coughed out all he knew!" Shang

probably meant that the old gramp was spineless...

"Of all time. Shang, you jerk!" While having a road-runner show with Feng Su, Ye Chong cursed as he was forced to bear with Shang's words. He no longer had the mood to play with the wild kitty, as he turned to the other side to meet with Shang somewhere else. He was making his escape. He ran as far as possible to Shang he reckoned.

A twist, a stomp to the ground, a tur-Ye Chong's legs felt tightened.

Ye Chong was astonished as his body tilted to the front like being pulled by inertia. Fortunately he reacted in time. He hit the ground with his palms, lifted from the ground like a spring, his waist charged up and he made a flip. Feng Su's eyes glared strangely as her speed rose sharply. The luster in her eyes waved like odd beams as she moved rapidly.

Right when Ye Chong repositioned himself, that woman launched herself into him. That fair palm of hers inched towards Ye Chong and blatantly she aimed his throat!

The more dangerous the situation became, the calmer his thoughts turned. He maximized the speed of his hands as his right hand vanished and reappeared before his throat while his left hand had shifted to his chest, shielding his heart.

Ye Chong might be an enemy, but an impeccable enemy he was. Compliment blinked in her eyes upon seeing how Ye Chong was still able to react in the nick of time. That speed was also an overwhelming surprise to her.

"Still!"

It was not sufficient to stop her attack!

Wham!

Ugh!!

Ye Chong moaned as the rib on his right felt ruptured. He scowled as he went jabbing Feng Su's neck. The dead-or-alive situation had once again ignited the potential in Ye Chong. The speed of his hands had gone beyond what the naked eyes of humans could capture!

It missed Feng Su, as his hand slid through her cheek. Her prediction saved her again! She was pleased when she made a bend before anything else. Zoom! A sharp hiss cut through the air! Fear filled her eyes in a second. She could almost smell and feel death. She had never felt this close to death before.

Ye Chong hurriedly jumped up high.

She straightened her body and the aftershock lingered in her mind with bewilderment a moment after, wondering what in the Orbits Number 58 was doing. No fighter would go into the air as there would be nothing to grip onto to fight back! If this was his attempt to make a strike, that would be fruitless! His performance was outstanding the whole time. He should not be using such a low trick... Or... this... Was this a trap?

Ye Chong jumped up high. The blast he made on his feet was immense.

No you don't! Feng Su estimated the final height of Ye Chong as she also launched herself, striving to grab and pull him onto the ground. It was not her concern whether it was a trap! She would break him for sure!

Huh.

At that very point of time, things changed. A blue-white mech arrived in the scene and caught Ye Chong from mid-air. The next moment she knew, they disappeared.

Her eyes did see everything, including the appearance of the mech, well, most of it. That blue-white mech...

...

!!

"Ah!" Could it be...

Her mind went chaotic as she mumbled in disbelief.

Ye Chong was hung in Shang's right hand as his eyes coldly fixed on that woman who had wounded his body! It was inevitable that her other attributes were far inferior than Ye Chong, yet she almost had him. What a scary feline! What a horrible woman! No! Such fearsome mentalist!

Shang glided between the trees agilely. He was fast and moved with grace that the ace pilots were sweating just by seeing his performance.

Outside the woods there lied a broad lake, which was unfamiliar to Ye Chong. The incoming wind felt humid with a faint refreshing sensation. The water was crystal clear and mechs of all walks of models were flying above it.

Before he could utter a word, his back felt hollow as he drastically fell. He panicked.

"Ye, I'm dreadfully sorry... I...I... fooled around too much just now... I had run out of energy... I...I...I...I am...h...heading back to...di...dimension," only silence followed afterwards.

"Shang, you jerk!" cursed Ye Chong again. Even a saint like Ye Chong in most times could not bear with such crap as he fell all the way down haplessly.

Splash!

Ye Chong fell into the water as he was gargled by the river. Ye Chong might be an expert in piloting but he was still a novice in swimming. He did not know how to swim and he was struggling, drowning! He inhaled the fine portion of the mere air he got and he walked in the water. Due to his amazing control of his speed, he could feel the flow of the water clearly. As he became much calmer when being closer to death, his brain discerned every single bit of

information in the surroundings. He analyzed instantly with his past experiences as he attempted a variety of coordinations of his body in the water.

Not too long after Ye Chong dropped into the water, a purple mech zoomed by the lake.

The air flow created by its speed lifted ripples on the surface of the lake.

Gasp!

A head popped out on the lake, grasping for air. That was Ye Chong. The mask on his face somehow fell off when he was underwater. His face looked pale after holding his breath for so long.

Cough! Ugh!

He spat out the plants from his mouth. Ye Chong concluded his discovery on a method to stay on water and not to sink. His legs stepped on the water rhythmically, trying to stay afloat with the flows he created, though he had probably drunk gallons of them.

I am not expecting to be saved!

He clumsily propelled towards the shore. He whimpered as his wounds ached by water and his exaggerated movements. Damn you Shang! If you get back on... No! I should never get you back on! This was like the nth time Ye Chong cursed the drugged robot.

Well the cursing did not help Ye Chong in any bit, not even to distract him from the pain he had to suffer. If it was Mu, he would not have to suffer any of these! Only Shang this jerk could be such a nuisance to drop him into the water! Ye Chong laughed bitterly.

When he finally got to the shore, he collapsed. His calves felt strained... The fight with Feng Su was too energy consuming as every move could cost his life. Most of his stamina was depleted in the end. His wound... It was bad, especially after being dipped in the water for too long... It was a miracle that Ye Chong could still

hurl himself to the shore.

He was tired, so tired that he could barely lift his fingers. He could imagine himself never waking up again if he ever fell asleep.

The star blazed like a fireball. The warmth showered onto Ye Chong's body, comforting and hypnotizing it was, like the cradle of safety. His eyes grew drowsier... but he could not... he could not sleep... this was not a place to rest.

He never expected to be this weak one day! If he would be this weak back on Trash Planet-12, he probably would have become an empty skull gashed by the engulfers.

The sound of footsteps trailed in his ears. There was someone coming! But well... Ye Chong was too worn out to even open his eyes. He knew his fate, that he could not fight back even if the person was hostile. He ridiculed himself, yet he tried to adjust his breath, trying to accumulate the very last ounce of his strength.

The person came before him.

Here it goes!

...

... ..

Nothing happened. It was surprising to Ye Chong. Nonetheless he had to stay alert, though it might have been pointless in the end, as he looked as good as dead. He tried feeling his breath and eventually, he could feel his strength coming back bit by bit.

Ye Chong never opened his eyes as he assumed that would make the foe reckless. Well, if he were to show resistance, he could only dish out one strike at his very best. At least he could paralyze the foe with a blow of his arm or something... then he would have a cushion for the night, assuming the foe was truly hostile that is.

Out of the blue, he felt the person gently pushing his body!

Chapter 118: Nan Nan

"...ig br...er..."

"Big bro...er..."

"Big brother!"

An adorable voice rang sweetly by Ye Chong's ears, "Big brother! If you stay under this hot sun your skin will become dark, very dark!" With her tiny hands, she held Ye Chong. She tried shaking him very hard. She kept shaking him in hopes that he'll regain consciousness. Due to her small build, she did not have enough strength to shake Ye Chong who was much heavier than she was.

Ye Chong forced his heavy and tired eyes open. He tilted his head over and beamed at the little girl in front of him. The bitter smile on his quivering lips shone a little terrifyingly with that drained face of his.

The little girl seemed to be about 5 to 6 years old. The pair of large eyes blinked peculiarly above her dollish pink cheeks. A pale green beret sat on top of her head obediently... That was not a beret, that was a lid! The slots on it justified its identity! Ye Chong recognized it being one of the parts of a mech. The material seemed unusual too. Ye Chong wondered what this lid was made out of as he was amazed by the craftsmanship.

A red diamond shaped piece about the size of a palm hung around her neck. There were 4 holes tidily crafted on it. Ye Chong was astonished! Wasn't this a part of a mech's interior? It was the washer, wasn't it? Why was she using it as an accessory?

Judging by her naivety blatantly presented through her appearance, Ye Chong let off a sigh of relief. It seemed like his security was finally assured.

"Wow... Big Brother, your smile's ugly! Were you bitten by a dog? You poor, poor thing!" She expressed her utmost sympathy. The

little girl carried on, "Big brother, can you move? You have to move! Yikes! You'll get dark, very, very dark! What if... you become as dark as Brother Hei Zi... That wouldn't be good..." She pondered hard about it and frowned. She somehow looked adorable in that state. "Aha!" she clapped her hands as she got inspired by something. Her angelic voice cheered loudly as she tripped her way away.

For some reason Ye Chong felt rather relaxed after listening to innocent words uttered by the little girl - it was as if something deep, deep down had awakened. His sight lost the waddling little girl... "She had probably headed home," Ye Chong laughed and closed his eyes once more. He focused on regulating his breath, striving to regain his vitality as soon as possible. Being out of control on his own fate felt absolutely terrible.

He breathed in rhythms, attempting to avoid dozing off. It was a challenge to stay awake under a fatigued condition like this... A trial to one's will was to not be lured away by sleep! The tiredness crashed into his head wave by wave. There were a few times where he fell asleep before knowing it yet he dragged himself out of the bog. Sleep could have been helpful in rejuvenating his strength but not fast enough.

It was agonizing to stay awake yet it was quite effective. He could feel his strength restoring bit by bit. This excited him. The exhaustion was mostly gone! Mhm, in about 10 minutes time, I should at least regain mobility!

Out of the blue he felt the glaring light vanished. Something was blocking his face and the scorching heat was greatly reduced!

He had his eyes opened.

His blurred vision discerned a small hand holding onto grass weaved into a shape of a ring which blocked the sunlight.

Her expressive eyes blinked again, "Big brother!" The charm was captivating, as her cheery voice resounded, "You won't get dark

now! Hehehe, isn't Nan Nan smart?"

Ye Chong subconsciously smiled, without realizing how that smile twitched his wound. Hsssst... Hsstt... Out of immense ache he hissed pitifully.

"Hehehe..." little Nan Nan giggled, seeing how Ye Chong's face turned bitter. Her laugh was bubbly, like ringing bells in spring. It was far lovelier to the ears than Feng Su's voice. "Ow... poor, poor, big brother..." After giggling, her faint brows squeezed, "It must be bad, bad doggie! Bad, bad doggie bit big brother! Bad doggie is bad! Bad doggie bite Nan Nan's dress!" While she shared her bad experience with a dog, she did not forget to show her sympathy too, "Big brother, your clothes, doggie bit it? Did bad doggie bite you?"

"Mhm!"

"Hehehehe~ Nan Nan was out alone. Shhh, it is a s-e-c-r-e-t. Grandpa and Brother Hei Zi says Nan Nan should not play outside. But staying home is boring! Nan Nan wants to play! Big brother, play with Nan Nan, okay?"

"Mhm!"

"Yay! Nan Nan is happy! Big brother is good! Good big brother!"

...

Three men walked by the river. They seemed to be chatting idly, as sometimes lustfully they burst out laughing. The filthy-looking shorty was ugly as hell. He looked like a pumpkin which rolled off a cliff. Every part of his face was well-blended. "Hey you both! Look over there!" he called the other two men as he spotted something.

For the other men, one was somewhat normal... yeah, the kind that would get missing once stepped into the crowd, while the other was fleshy on his face, looking messy as unshaved. Their eyes rolled in curiosity. They seemed quick-witted at least.

As guided by the shorty's finger, they shifted their sight over, "Lao Pi, what is so worthy of all the heyhoo there?" The rugged man chuckled, "It's just some beggar hooking up with a little girl. What is so exciting about that?"

The average guy said nothing, but his expression told the same.

Lao Pi sneered as he ignored that average guy's expression, "You are just as dumb as you always are, Lao Meng! Look at Lao Ping, at least he's not as dumb as a donkey like someone I know! Look at that little girl carefully!"

Lao Ping and Lao Meng stared at little Nan Nan dancing around the beggar for a moment. "She's just a kid," muttered Lao Meng. "Why are we looking at her for? Don't tell me... you are a pedophile in disguise?"

"Shhhhh!" whispered Lao Ping. "Say it quietly. You can't criticize the person who's in front of you." He lectured though his expression showed approval towards Lao Meng's statement. And Lao Meng started giggling nonstop!

Ugh!

The corner of Lao Ping's eyes twitched, as the wrinkles on his face splashed like waves, "Look at what the girl has on her head..." He pretended he had never heard the comment, "And also her neck."

"Wha-"

"Tsk, tsksk," interrupted Lao Pi as he grew impatient. "Sigh, some people just can't use their eyes the right way. Don't you see the obvious, stark things on her body? That kid has part of an inner ring of a mech's feet, yes, that pale green ring. It should either be the bones of the green beast or the skull of fletchant, yes it could be the skull of that bird. Tsk, tsksk, do you know how much could this be sold for?"

!

Lao Ping and Lao Meng finally got the whole reason why Lao Pi reacted dramatically upon seeing the girl. Their eyes went wide like saucer as they spoke together. "How much?"

"Keke!" Lao Pi was getting puffed up seeing how the two dummies showing the expected reaction. "It would be strange if you know its actual value. Let me tell you... that piece isn't some ordinary knock-off in the street. Tsk, obviously it's a masterpiece out of pure handcraft. And not any maker on Haleyson could produce such artistry, I reckoned."

"Stop blowing your own trumpet! Just tell us how much it is already!" Lao Meng's face was filled with disdain while Lao Ping depicted supports at the side.

"100,000? At the very least," Lao Pi was not really sure of the exact pricing, but that should be it!

That dubious stare from Lao Ping was discomforting... Lao Pi's face reddened as he embarrassingly replied, "I do not know the exact figure! Well, at least it would not be lower than this!"

"For real?" Lao Meng immediately responded skeptically. "This crap could go up to 100,000 of the currency here? Hah! No way! Stop pulling my leg! With 100,000 of our currency you could get the same junk hat. 100,000 of them!"

Lao Ping stayed silent as he collected his mind.

"The crap you know with your head!" Lao Pi's face tightened as his face went redder, "Let me tell you something more to fill that airhead of yours! Junk hat? Whoever that is rich and insane enough to get this piece as a hat, he would be the mascot of the planet! The more valuable part is that washer on the kid's neck! I am dead f*cking sure this piece worth a fortune! Way more than that ring!"

"Whatever you say, boasting Pi," Lao Meng disdainfully spoke.

"Why you!"

"Hey! Hey! Hey! I don't understand why you guys could bicker when the thing is not even in our hands! Wouldn't it be much easier if we get those things and check the price ourselves rather than guessing and denying each other here? I She's just a kid, how hard could it be! And that beggar seemed to be kicking his bucket anytime soon. No pressure, Lao Meng, go get the things off the little girl! And we would head straight to Huang San's place for appraisal. Maybe we could really make a fortune out of these!"

Lao Meng went chuckling again upon hearing the suggestion. He showed approval as he headed to Nan Nan.

Ye Chong on the ground could feel every quake occurred. That heavy footsteps coming into his senses immediately illustrated a buffed man heading towards him. Ye Chong had his eyes wide open. Nan Nan was busy fanning Ye Chong with the grass ring in her hands. Good Nan Nan... not! Thanks to the grass ring, Ye Chong could hardly see the appearance of the coming foe, though he could see the legs clearly.

Ye Chong put up his guard. By some means, Ye Chong was having an urge to prevent this little girl from getting into any kind of troubles. "By some means" it was, he could not explain why, but the urge was strong and still! Sadly Mu and Shang were not by his side, or he could at least investigate this strange feeling in detail.

The footsteps got nearer and Nan Nan did not seem to have noticed a thing. Could that be a relative of hers? Ye Chong was ready! A portion of his strength had recovered! He could launch an attack for the girl anytime soon!

As Lao Meng started breeze-walking towards Nan Nan, she noticed something as she turned her head, "Big brother, is this your friend? He is coming to help you? Is he?"

Ye Chong's heart skipped a beat. Nan Nan does not know this person! Who in the Haleyson could this person be! What does he want!

Lao Meng gleefully walked towards little Nan Nan. The grin was not helpful at all. He already looked horrifying enough with his appearance, adding that grin would only make him the most fearsome monster to the girl. Nan Nan was foreign to the smiling creature as she fearfully hid behind Ye Chong. Her head popped over his back, taking a peek. "Yikes!" She withdrew herself and started trembling behind.

"Big brother! Nan Nan... Nan Nan is afraid! Beard man is scary! Bad beard man!" she shook Ye Chong slightly and her voice was choked with tears helplessly.

"Heya, little girl. I meant no harm," Lao Meng squeezed every kind of smile he had seen in his life before, "I just wanted to take a look at that beautiful green hat of yours. Oh, what a pretty necklace, could you give me that red... red..." He scratched his head and mumbled, "The heck was that again? Lao Pi had mentioned it before... How could I forget it... Sheesh, this is humiliating..."

Nan Nan wanted to stay alert but due to that introductory line of that bad beard man, she could not! She tried suppressing her laugh. All the intense fear she had before was gone. She pulled a face at Lao Meng, spitting her tongue, "Stupid beard man! Stupid! Stupid!"

And thereby Ye Chong got the big picture of the entire scenario. So that was what the man wanted! Man I am dumb! How could I forget this? Did my IQ just go down with my stamina after I get hurt?

Mu had once said it before - when one possesses a value beyond one's own strength, one would be coveted by people. Looks like he was right after all!

Lao Meng took a glance at that beggar half-dead.

He did not seem threatening at all, man I am really dumb! The heck am I doing these mumbo-jumbo for, I'll just snatch it!

Lao Meng kept his smile as he sprinted towards the kid.

Nan Nan the smart little girl sensed the danger as she sank into Ye Chong's back. Her body was shaking violently.

Lao Meng stopped before the pathetic beggar as he launched his grab towards the girl.

And that was when Ye Chong made his move after being a splat of mud for so long!

Chapter 119: Rescued

A twinge seized Lao Meng's rib and spread throughout his body. He lost control of his body out of a bewildering sudden as he collapsed right onto the lying beggar. And that was the moment when he realized the fact that the half-dead looking beggar actually had his eyes opened, glaring right into his soul!

The cold classic stare from Ye Chong caused Lao Meng's heart to twitch.

Back in Black Coves, perhaps Ye Chong was not able to master the greatest assault, however he did learn a few of one-hitting techniques to hold the foes. The one occurred before was a strike to the target's spinal cord to disable the target's control to the body. It sounded all powerful like a technique from the martial arts tales, however as a matter of fact this was the most fundamental move in the Black Coves. Ye Chong did hear about other skills that were more tormenting and overwhelming back then, which some of them being truly bizarre!

Ye Chong used the technique when the foe let his guard down. A perfect one-hit strike!

He laughed bitterly in his mind. The move seemed simple, yet it consumed a majority part of his charged stamina. His breathing became hasty again.

Habitually, the following procedure could have been the killing. Ye Chong would hardly leave a living foe to spread his words around. The strike before was fatal enough to take this buffed man out, but Ye Chong simply did not have the stamina to kill this guy!

This technique could have been both efficient and effective. The effect was only temporary nonetheless. After a certain duration had passed and that duration was not long in actuality, the enemy would retrieve control of his body without any wound. And the one who would suffer the worst fate would be Ye Chong himself!

Ye Chong hoped that he could regain his stamina in time to at least launch one last strike before the enemy could move again. Once and for all!

Ye Chong's eyes looked bloodthirsty!

As Lao Meng saw every expression on Ye Chong, out of fright, he screamed on top of his lungs, "Yikes! Why the hell can't I move anymore? Holy Haleyson! Lao Ping, Lao Pi, get yourselves over here and save me! F*cking hell! I got set up! Quick! Get yourself here already!" Lao Meng's coarse voice roared harshly.

Ye Chong flinched - he did not come alone? He was no longer concerned on his energy-saving plan as he pushed the beefy man to the side - Ugh, I thought I was moving a whale or something! Ye Chong stood up frantically on his weakened limbs - assuming the foe had mates behind, then I would surely lose in the end if I kept lying on the ground! He took a look at Nan Nan, who was covering her eyes and squatting on the ground, shivering. Somehow a hint of warmth rushed through Ye Chong's body upon seeing her.

I'll just do my best, thought Ye Chong. The situation was not as optimistic however.

Obviously he was thrown into a nasty situation, where the odds were all against him. Nonetheless, he did not rant or show grudges!

Providing that he would be killed in the end, he had to make the kill cost them a lot at the very least! Violence flashed in the dark pupils of his eyes, which frightened Lao Meng who had been watching this fierce beggar the whole time. His voice rang drastically, "Lao Ping, Lao Pi, be careful! This is a savage one!"

Lao Ping and Lao Pi inched towards Ye Chong sluggishly, as their faces were fixed with grim.

The sudden collapse of their friend was more than shocking. Till he made that SOS shriek, they were not aware that Lao Meng had

fallen prey to a set-up.

The fact that the beggar stood up weakly was comforting to the two. At least he looked fragile as if he could fall in a breeze! Even so, thinking back of how desperate Lao Meng's reminder sounded, their expressions turned grave once more, as they knew Lao Meng well. He might be a man who was all rough and tough but he had some real sensibility.

The beggar's indifference even in such a nerve-wrecking situation justified Lao Meng's reaction. It was then the two noticed the strangeness in this foe.

"Hey friend!" Lao Ping was acting kind as he spoke slowly, "This... This was just some misunderstanding, right? This friend of mine found the girl rather adorable, so he wanted to play with her. I know his jokes were pretty bad..." Lao Pi in the meantime shifted to the back of Ye Chong and started inching towards him. This was the 3 mousy-tears' way of resolving issues after running business in the Orbits for years. They were a flawless team - Lao Ping first would use words to hold the foe, while Lao Pi would strike from the back. It always worked! Even if the foe did not fall for the strike, at least it would hold the foe throughout the entire conversation.

Unfortunately... What they had encountered was an oddity. Ye Chong was that one major who went against chattering during combats!

Ye Chong did not bother to carry on listening as he turned to his back, lifted his leg and launched a kick right into Lao Pi, which shocked the heck out of Lao Pi. It was a rare occasion to have a foe who wanted to fight right away. However, the kick gave no effect. It felt as weak as the beggar. And Lao Pi was relieved.

Seeing how the dirty beggar wanted to pick a fight for real, he decided to stop blabbering and give a kick to his back as he lifted his foot.

Lao Pi sneered as he felt harmless of the beggar's kick. He moved faster towards Ye Chong.

Out of the blue, that feeble leg of Ye Chong's sprang, like a serpent ready to take a bite. Fearsome it looked! The target was the neck! If the kick landed on point, the throat would shatter and the man would be dead! Lao Pi did not manage to react in time to dodge, as he covered his head with his arms crossed.

Thup! The kick hit Lao Pi's arms. That was when Lao Pi was astounded by how much heavier the blow landed than it appeared! Ye Chong's leg was stuck on the arms. He exerted more pressure on Lao Pi's arms, the arms went closer to the face. Outrageous! Lao Pi used all his strength to force Ye Chong away. As adrenaline rushed on such a dead-or-alive situation, Lao Pi's strength was amazing. Lao Ping was relieved seeing this.

Who knows!

Thup!

Ye Chong used the push by Lao Pi, as he fired himself towards Lao Ping.

Lao Pi's leg was already lifted and he could not react in time. He only saw how Ye Chong was lifted by the force of Lao Ping and sank into Lao Ping, like a snake slithering over Lao Ping's leg, raising his upper body alarmingly.

Lao Ping's right leg was crushed as he lost balance. How else could he react?

Ye Chong had his eyes closed. Ache covered the top of his head, as he whimpered.

Crack!

A cracking sound of bone-crushing. Lao Ping fell onto the ground with his face hardened.

In that split second, Ye Chong launched his head right onto Lao

Ping's chin. The blow was so strong that it actually broke Lao Ping's chin. The chin had always been the more delicate part of the anatomy, so Lao Ping collapsed due to the heavy blow.

Ye Chong and Lao Ping rolled together. The whole execution just now had completely exhausted every ounce of his strength. He could not even lift his fingers at that moment. Plus that blow he delivered with his head also returned a severe dizziness.

The vision blurred out and he looked all giddy.

In the fuzzy imagery, he saw the last man sneaked towards him... and there was one dark spot behind him that was becoming bigger.

What was that dark spot...?

Ye Chong's eyes grew blurrier... And the sound in the surrounding retreated like the waves as they grew further.

Nan Nan... I tried... my best...

This was Ye Chong's final thought before he fell into darkness and went unconscious.

...

... ..

Ah!

Ye Chong opened his eyes abruptly. It was a foreign environment. "Mu... Shang... Are you there? Mu, Shang, speak to me if you are." The first thing he did was to try contacting his partners to at least have an idea what was going on. Sadly Mu did not reply despite being the usual quick one to answer his inquiry, while Shang... he then only remembered the fact that Shang had drained his battery before.

Oh... the battle. He pieced up the fragmented memories. Wondered what happened to Nan Nan... she was probably rescued or Ye Chong would have been dead undeniably, considering how those peculiar men would not spare him at mercy.

He took a look on his body and lifted his limbs. Okay, all were good. The wound was mostly healed. It was satisfying to see his own strength coming back as normal. If the 3 men would come and taunt Ye Chong again, he would skew them in 5 seconds for sure.

He checked his belonging... Okay, the talisman on the neck was intact. At least I could summon Mu Shang if anything went wrong! This was most important to Ye Chong. The keystone for Yu Di was still there too. The bag... everything was there. Nothing was lost! The dagger, a gift of the person was there. Ye Chong felt much more relieved.

At last, he started inspecting his surroundings.

Ye Chong was on a bed; the mattress felt comfy. The room was pitifully cramped compared to the room Ye Chong used to stay where his mechs could be stored altogether. The pale green walls had countless tiny adornments, which gave off a living vibe to the room. There was a mini nano-water filtration machine at one corner with quite a number of knitted animals at the other. What are these for? Ye Chong wondered - Are they some sort of target for practice? The knitted animals did not look realistic while some details were overdone. They did not even look close to their actual counterpart!

Weird stuffs! Thought Ye Chong.

Right at that moment, Ye Chong's ears caught two footsteps heading towards this room. He was alerted as he got off the bed and went into his defensive stance.

Bang. The door was pushed open!

It was Nan Nan! Right at one frame where the door was first opened, he could already discern her through the tiny gap.

Nan Nan entered the room, "Big brother! You're finally awake!" Hurrahed Nan Nan as she saw Ye Chong standing in the middle of the room, "Good! Nan Nan is happy! Very good! Good Ye Chong!"

Joyfulness gleamed on her face.

She was cute as usual but Ye Chong did not have the grace to look at her jumping around, instead his eyes fixed on that dark man at her back. The man should be at his 30s... he was very tanned. His shirtless body revealing his large muscles was rather scary, though his smile depicted a quite sincere personality. He followed Nan Nan carefully, probably was afraid that Nan Nan could trip anytime with her clumsy steps.

That body size obviously defined his strength in Ye Chong's eyes.

The dark man grinned the moment he noticed the constant stare from Ye Chong. His teeth were sparkling white.

Little Nan Nan was intelligent. The moment she realized the exchanging stare between them, she went pulling Ye Chong's pant and introduced gently, "Big Brother, this is my Brother Hei Zi. He loves Nan Nan very, very, very muchie! That day, Brother Hei Zi came and found Nan Nan. We are lucky. If not, big brother and I would be sad, very, very, sad. We got hit!"

Little Nan Nan's messily produced description adorned with her hyper-active gesture finally clarified Ye Chong on what happened after he passed out. So that enlarging dark spot was the mech of Hei Zi. He saved his life in the nick of time.

"Thank you for saving me," Ye Chong thanked him with much appreciation.

"No no no!" Friendlily Hei Zi replied, "It was what I should have done. I should be the one thanking you. If it was not for you, Nan Nan... she could have been..." He withdrew his word... he seemed pretty mortified by what could have possibly happened.

Chapter 120: In Search of a Visit

Without much hesitation, Ye Chong decided to stay for a while. The reasons were simple - first, he was going to search for the great doctors in this area; second, the training method of the mentalist discovered by Shang required much exploration - a tranquil environment would be necessary to achieve both of these. The outside world was pretty disturbed these days, though Ye Chong did not fear any of those incoming raids, he would prefer a bit of silence for the moment.

So calmly, he stayed at Nan Nan's place, with these 2 quests in his mind which revolved about the horrible illness in him. He must stay, especially when the quests could take a long duration, be it finding out the great doctors or the breakthrough in the mentalist's methodology.

Mu and Shang were fully charged way back. The first thing Shang got was a lecture about responsibility from Ye Chong, in detailed, vigorously after he rebooted. Sigh, what a headache to Ye Chong!

Practically Nan Nan's family was of 3 members - her grandfather, Brother Hei Zi and Nan Nan herself. Ye Chong had rarely seen her grandfather showing up at the living room, although the elderly seemed to be in the pink of health. He always seemed to be somewhere else. The problem was the elderly appeared a little haughty sometimes, unlike Hei Zi who acted gentle and sincere the whole time.

Ye Chong was recollecting the information obtained from Shang's private interrogation on poor Mr. Yin.

Mentalist was sure a mysterious occupation... Most of the information contained jargons passed from the past generations. An ordinary person might not be able to understand the gist of being a mentalist even after being bestowed with such decent

information filled with foreign terminology. Fortunately, Shang's own databank was vast in information, so a majority of the terms could be clarified; while the undefined terms, certainly Shang would have to get it somewhere else, for instance, from Mr. Yin's head...

Mr. Yin was in such a misfortune. It could have been the worst day of his life. Mentalist treated the foundation of their mentality as the root; the meaning of their life. And because of Shang's "special" interrogation, everything was pulled out of his head through his mouth, which caused severe damage to his mentality in the end. The drastic drop in his psychic ability was in expectation.

Well, Ye Chong was not a psychological analyst. He knew nothing about the man's mind. Only Shang could voice his opinion as loud as he wanted and even Mu expressed helplessness in this field.

Hence, based on what he had learned from Shang's digging of Mr. Yin's brain, he began his mentalist training.

The catch was, information could never replace experience completely. That probably could clearly define the problem both Shang and Ye Chong faced currently. They might have sufficient information on the techniques, but Ye Chong still had to bear the process of being the lab rat while experimenting the techniques. He did not mind being one however.

The foundation of being a mentalist begins with meditation - technically, breathing and meditate, which was what Ye Chong was doing at the moment. To make his respiration slow yet profound in a certain rhythm while maintaining a state of emptiness in his head, the mentalists called it "Wu" or some addressed the state as "Kong Ming*".

The breathing part was rather simple to Ye Chong. He was so used to adjusting his breathing in desired patterns. This

requirement was achieved rather quickly and effortlessly.

The Kong Ming state though... It was challenging... He realized it was difficult to think about nothing in his head. In spite of that, Ye Chong did not give up straightaway. He tried for the next few days and on the 10th day of the practice, he started to get the gist of it.

According to the information acquired, a talented person would usually achieve the state of emptiness on their first attempt while the less-talented kinds could get it on the 2nd or 3rd day of training... For those who could not even get it after 3 days... they... they could never be a candidate for mentalist.

Although the information sounded discouraging, Ye Chong did not bother - whether if he was a candidate for mentalist or he was never one to begin with, it did not matter. He only hoped that he could ease the pain when the symptoms were triggered again with one or two techniques learned from the mentalist's mastery. That was the whole point of his continuous training.

Mentalist solely relied on mental training to develop the potential in mankind. In addition, coming from that unlucky Mr. Yin, apparently there was a closely related branch off the mentalist occupation - the "mentalist pilot" they called it. Unlike mentalist, a mentalist pilot was obliged to undergo mental training as well as physical training.

Moreover, according to this man, it seemed like the mentalist pilot held the actual authority in the Orbits. They were the true elites as they shouldered the duty of guarding the safety of the sanctuary. Every mentalist pilot happened to be an ace pilot and they owned mechs modified by themselves.

Well then, if that was the case, Feng Su should be a mentalist pilot too. Ye Chong could still recall the pain when dealing with her like it happened yesterday. So he was well aware of the strength of a mentalist pilot.

The progress of his spiritual awareness training was sluggish and

barely effective. It would take up to ages if Ye Chong would like to master those advanced techniques mentioned in the information at this rate. Ye Chong did not throw a tantrum of impatience however, as he understood deeply that being impatient and acting impatiently would not help hastening the progress at all. So what was the point of being all restless and agitated? Such a typical Mu mindset fixed in Ye Chong's head.

Ye Chong would meditate routinely at night and he would spend the days looking for the great doctors with Hei Zi, who wholeheartedly assisted him in this with compassion. Nan Nan's grandfather was ever-going, he was always busy with something. Hei Zi could only accompany Ye Chong half of the day as he had to spend the remaining time on doing tasks given by Nan Nan's grandfather, though Ye Chong had the slightest idea on what they actually worked as.

As he was meditating, he heard two footsteps - one was heavy and the other was lighter - obviously those were from Hei Zi and Nan Nan.

He tidied his clothing - his own clothing was burnt way back. And because of that, he was wearing Hei Zi's clothes instead. Hei Zi's body was known to be much bulkier, so the clothing felt oversized on Ye Chong. It was not much of a concern to Ye Chong however, he folded the sleeves and the extra portion of the clothing. As long as the clothing would not affect his action, oversized or not, it did not matter, even though Ye Chong looked like a freak in it...

On the other hand, Nan Nan was on cloud nine. She was often at home alone and was forbidden to head out. It used to be her life crisis to remain like this but then she met Ye Chong, who could stay by her side at home while in the morning she could head out with Brother Hei Zi and Ye Chong. Even if Ye Chong was heading out alone, he would get her along. "Good big brother! Good Brother Hei Zi!" giggled the little girl, which was peculiar to her

grandfather for how he actually felt easy of letting his granddaughter go out with this stranger.

"Big brother!! Big brother, are you ready? Brother Hei Zi and I are ready! Come out! Let's go play! Let's go play!" The little girl had already started shouting in excitement ahead of time. Her bubbly voice rang refreshing like the dewes in the dawn - sweet and living.

Ye Chong pushed the door open. "Big brother!!" Little Nan Nan hurrahed as she skipped her way to Ye Chong clumsily upon seeing him finally leaving the room. Ye Chong quickly grabbed her before she fell. At about 1 meter away from Ye Chong, little Nan Nan squeaked excitingly as she jumped and Ye Chong lifted his arms and held her up in the air. He put the little girl over his shoulders. "Hehehe!" Little Nan Nan chuckled as her mushy hands gripped the collar of his shirt to avoid falling.

Hei Zi smiled at Ye Chong sincerely as usual while they headed out.

"The doctor is called 'Dr. Lu Caite'. He lives at the boundary of Zeuth area. It is quite far from here. I am not really familiar about this doctor... I think I need to ask around once we arrived there." Hei Zi was not the kind who spoke too well on lengthy sentences. He went silent after a brief explanation.

"Mhm," Ye Chong also shut his mouth after a monosyllabic response. One could imagine the scenario when 2 concise-talkers hung out together.

As the journey would be consuming this time, they could only use mechs to rush their way there.

"Good mech!" Right when Ye Chong deployed Yu Di, Hei Zi responded with his eyes lustered, "Though the material was... normal," his words trailed off...

Normal? What did he mean by normal? Other than the mechs at Black Coves and FMFA, Ye Chong was confident enough to claim

that Yu Di had the best material. Or did it mean Hei Zi's mech used a way better material than this?

"Ugly mech! Ugly big brother's mech!" criticized Little Nan Nan as she spat her tongue out.

"Hah!" And Hei Zi deployed his mech too.

Well, Hei Zi's mech looked quite normal... it was a humanoid mech. The material was really an eye-opener however, as most parts were made out of materials Ye Chong had never seen before. It was the same black mech but it was not the sparkling black metallic texture he used to see on Black Cove's mech. The material of Hei Zi's mech looked like something he knew but it was not something he knew at all. Yes, it looked like some sort of reformed material, yet the marks on the surface looked like it was wholly natural, which was really amazing to Ye Chong.

Hei Zi grinned the moment he saw how Ye Chong's eyes were all glued on his mech, "The master made it for me!" That master uttered in Hei Zi's mouth was none other than Nan Nan's grandfather.

"What material is this?" asked Ye Chong as he went touching the surface. Both strength and ductility were fair!

"Ye." Mu's voice echoed in his head, "This is a strange material. It is my first encounter of such peculiarity. It did not seem to be artificial. The stats were all-rounded perfections. It is an impeccable material to build a mech!"

Well it was simply because Shang had hit his time so he had to switch with Mu. What a relief to Ye Chong.

"Most of these are from the skeletons of the Giant Black Whale." As he identified the interest in Ye Chong towards his own mech, Hei Zi explained, "They are very ductile."

Giant... Black Whale? Skeleton? You made mech with skeletons? That was really new to Ye Chong.

He wanted to inquire more about this "skeleton-hidden-in-mech" sorcery but Hei Zi was already hopping into his cabin. Eventually Ye Chong had to inhibit his curiosity as he brought Nan Nan into the cabin, starting off their journey.

The mechs moved extremely fast. It did not take them long to hit the boundary of Zeuth.

They kept their mechs into the dimension after they had landed successfully.

"I had only came here a few times before," mumbled Hei Zi. "Not really sure here. Dr. Lu was someone I heard from gossips. We need to ask around."

"Mhm," and again, a simple response from Ye Chong. They had been through various places, meeting up with countless great doctors at the area, but none of them could identify Ye Chong's illness in the end. Ironically, some of them even assumed that this was a stupid prank pulled off by these irresponsible, immature youngsters as they angrily abandoned the two bewildered men, waving their sleeves restlessly home.

Asking the way became the mission for little Nan Nan, simply because she dealt the most damage to motherly females. And it worked like a charm, in no time they had gotten the exact address for Dr. Lu, thanks to the kindest enlightenment from this momma on the street. They reached the said address fast.

"Is it here?" pointed Ye Chong at one house surrounded by quite a number of mechs.

There were 5 mechs surrounding the corners of this house. It looked like a war could brew anytime...

"That should be it," Hei Zi sounded a little unsure...

"Antsient...Rock Sutreeet.. Seven Paive Tree," Little Nan Nan was reading the address, which was "Ancient Rock Street-753". She tried reading it carefully and then declared it proudly, "It is here!"

We found it! We did it! We did it! We did it! Hurray!"

But what were those mechs doing here? Ye Chong and Hei Zi looked at each other in dismay.

Chapter 121: Getting Involved

Ye Chong observed the landscape carefully while taking a look around the mechs parked outside the building. They did not seem friendly. A fight could easily take place with these mechs around. Ye Chong could be ill inside, but his intuitive sensitivity towards a brewing brawl did not appear to be reducing anytime soon. Anytime, anywhere, where Ye Chong stood, he could feel the hidden violence wafting in the air.

The models of the 5 mechs were rather foreign to Ye Chong. Well, ever since Ye Chong ventured into the Orbits, he started noticing the fact how all the mechs in the Orbits happened to be utterly contrasting to the design and style of mechs outside. They were so different, obviously they came from totally dissimilar branches of the craftsmanship.

The mechs were of a variety of shapes, which most of them depicted the appearance of animals. That was quite rare at the other planets Ye Chong had been in. He did come across several kinds of beast-form mechs in the major galaxies but a great number of pilots took the humanoid model in actuality. Men were known as the head of all living things in the world. Thus it was likely for one to assume men being the ultimate ruler of the world. Their preference over a humanoid model could be justified for it was the pride of all men, disregarding the forces and the places, even the armory of Black Covers and the pilots from FMFA comprised a majority of these humanoids.

On the contrary, inside the Orbits, the mechs were literally animals - from insects and birds to beasts. It was as if Ye Chong had stepped into a mechanical zoo. He could see almost every kind of animals here, which many of the species were unknown to Ye Chong too.

The 5 mechs - wolf, spider, bird, gorilla and toad... I think? This was the conclusion after Ye Chong cracked his head figuring out

the animals the mechs were portraying after a moment. And the accuracy? Ye Chong did not have the confidence to bet.

He was also unsure of the performance of these mechs in combats. He did find the positions of these mechs surrounding the house reasonable though. This could actually lock down the entire building, so no one inside could escape.

Ye Chong grabbed Nan Nan off his shoulders and laid her on Hei Zi's shoulders instead. "?" Hei Zi stared at Ye Chong in bewilderment, "Both of you, get home first," whispered Ye Chong to Hei Zi, the expression was frightening.

"No!" Nan Nan pursed her cherry lips as her head rattled, "No! No! Nu! Nan Nan not heading back! Nan Nan wants to stay near big brother!"

"What are you going to do?" Hei Zi's eyes were huge.

His question was not answered. Ye Chong returned a cold glare, which Hei Zi shunned at as he shifted his head away. He did not say a word next. His foot was rooted.

"It is bad. Nan Nan could be in danger," calmly Ye Chong stated.

"Fighting?" Nan Nan desperately clenched on Hei Zi, as she raised her chest, solemnly her sweet voice rang, "Nan Nan isn't scared! Nan Nan can fight too!"

"No, Nan Nan." As expected, Nan Nan was everything to Hei Zi. Reluctantly the tip of his toes struck the ground in agitation, "We are heading home. Mhm, I understand. I'll be sending her home. Take care!" His tone was stony, as if he knew what Ye Chong was going to do next.

Mhm.

That was Ye Chong's classic monosyllabic reply.

"Put me down! Put me down! Bad Brother Hei Zi! I want my big brother! Put me down!"

Hei Zi carried the unwilling little Nan Nan struggling on his shoulder back into the mech. They left, which then liberated Ye Chong from his final worry.

"I am warning you!" It sounded like a howl from an uncontrolled beast, the voice boomed in the building. "Don't you ever think I am a coward or something! F*cking hell I swear if you try with your stupid tricks again and I'll make sure you can't leave! You guys actually have the balls to come and mess with me! Heh! I would not give a f*ck to any of your last words anymore today! And whoever came and pleaded me, I would not f*cking care too! This is just elementary! I grew up with threats!"

It was so loud that every single word resounded clearly in Ye Chong's ears.

It was a dead silence after. For the next 20 minutes, nothing had happened. "It seemed to be working." "Told you he's the right guy to get deals!" "Right on!" The mechs outside were relaxed judging by the development, as they chatted happily in the communication channel.

Ye Chong was not certain of the situation, so he could not act just yet. He could have left and joined back Nan Nan with a formal apology to her highness. Although the doctor might be another wild goose chase in the end, he might not be cured, he had made his way here and seen everything! He was resistant at giving up this possibility which could be nothing in others' eyes. If the fight did not end, he would get involved!

Well then, if violence was involved, Ye Chong no longer had other concern. To Ye Chong, this was merely a matter of competition in brutal forces, between two fearsome beasts aiming the same prey.

Wham! Zoom! Out of sudden a mech scrambled out of the building, speeding away. Nevertheless, the pilot inside the mech apparently did not expect to be surrounded by these many mechs,

that he almost crashed into the bird-mech hovering in the sky. Ye Chong identified the lack of skills in the pilot's capability, blatantly he failed to make a turn in time. He was crashing.

The pilots in the 5 mechs were too engaged in their happy-go-lucky conversation as they never foresaw this happening. It was chaotic for a while, starting with a shriek from the pilot on the bird-mech. Out of intuition of self-protection, he immediately shifted his mech to dodge this unknown crashing mech.

However due to this one dodge, the perfect lock-down was no longer perfect. There was a gap and the mech took advantages of it by attempting to speed through. The wolf mech hopped up high to block his way. The pilot inside the escaping mech was really bad at his skills. A scalded scaredy cat he was too! It did not take much of a hassle before the mech was locked down by the 5 mechs again.

They finally had a chance to take a closer at this mech. It was completely green, with 4 spreading wings, a bird mech it was yet a time smaller than the usual bird-mech. That was embarrassing... and ridiculous too! The 5 men found this absurd that they nearly let such a flimsy mech out of their grip.

This was known as the Greenbird. Similar to the Raven in the galaxies, a Greenbird was the model for beginners in the Orbits.

The guarding bird-mech in misconduct realized the fact that he was put under such an embarrassment because of this novice. "How would the group see me if I let a Greenbird nearly escape?" Shamefully he was angered as he actually made such a silly mistake. He activated all the cartridge in his mech and locked on the damned Greenbird. The pilot needed to be taught a lesson of life that mockery could cost! All it took would be a tap on the button, then that pilot would be in ashes!

"Hold your fire! Wait for the boss, he wants the pilot. Don't kill the person just yet," the pilot in the wolf-mech calmly spoke.

It looked like the pilot of the wolf-mech was the leader of all 5

mechs. The pilot on the bird-mech was biting his teeth and grudgingly lifted his hands away from the control panel, obeying the order in rationality.

"Wait, if this guy is out and the boss is still in, does that mean something has happened to our boss?" the pilot in the wolf-mech was horrified.

The others seemed shocked upon hearing the inference too.

Boom! Abruptly, the sound of explosion roared in the midst of disbelief, as the 4 men witnessed their leader being transformed into countless specks. To their horror, there was no explosion actually! It sounded like an explosion but visually they just saw their leader "fragmenting". It was an unforgettable scene that would scar them for life. Within the flying specks of the mech, a mech with 4 arms and 2 faces drew near the remaining mates.

"Leader!" The 4 men were agonized. They could never believe the fact that their charismatic leader who cracked jokes with them before would be assassinated in split seconds right in front of them!

Who exactly was this strange mech?

The mystery only flashed in their mind once. That was no longer the matter! The remaining thoughts in their heads were about how they should slaughter and mince this merciless inhumanity into million pieces to avenge their brother! Their eyes were all in brute.

They went performing the inputs on the control panel, as they looked at their interfaces. To their terror, the screen displayed nothing! "But he is there! He's right there!" one man stuttered with his lips shaking.

Impossible! The 4 men could not believe their eyes.

"Get to manual!" The pilot of the bird-mech was unexpectedly aware of the situation as he screamed. He then shifted from automatic/partial-automatic lock-on shooting mode to manual

mode. As reminded by him, the remaining men also switched to manual mode.

"Finally we get to manual mode." The pilot in the bird-mech was relieved a little, believing that with his skill, he could finish the person for sure! The leader of their brotherhood had always complimented his shooting talents.

"I must avenge our brother!" Agony flooded his mind, his mental clarity had never felt so above-average before.

"It has to work!"

"Hahahahahahahahaha! I'll make sure you die in peace!" These were merely thoughts in his head. His hands trembled, holding the bullseye around; his eyes were glued on the screen, searching for that odd machine in desperation. "Where?! Where is he!" The strange mech seemed to have disappeared, leaving that greenhorn Greenbird all horrified, quivering at the corner.

"Third-eldest br-look out!" "Brother look out!" It happened so fast that the younger brother could not even address his elder brother in time.

The pilot in the bird-mech had his heart skipped a beat. "Don-Don't tell m-"

A severe pain shrouded his body. He passed out next. In blurry vision, he felt the world spinning like merry-go-round as he saw his life all over again. He saw the strange mech, the specks around him, the spinning mates... they were spinning too, they seemed terrified, then he saw the the leader. It was darkness after that. He knew nothing next.

Pieces of mechs rolled over Ye Chong's mech. Wow the 5 mechs were utter noobs! But it was weird the fact that he was never detected throughout the battle. "Don't tell me... Yu Di has some sort of anti-detection mechanism too?"

The blood spilled on Yu Di a little.

To prevent from being noticed due to unnecessary dramatic explosion, Ye Chong picked his trusty steed, the magnetic blade to fight instead!

The remnants were all over the place, with the blood and some charred flesh, it was a little frightening, Ye Chong had to admit.

The Greenbird seemed to be all jammed up by the rapid development of the story. Ye Chong frowned as he figured things out - that Greenbird ran from the inside, it had probably something to do with the Dr. Lu I had been looking for... He lifted the Greenbird with the arm of his mech. It did not flail, obediently it stayed still in his grip.

Well, I'll hold it if you don't mind.

The weaponry on the Greenbird seemed rather obsolete and could barely scratch Yu Di, which was why Ye Chong could daringly hold it in the arms.

Ye Chong piloted Yu Di back to Dr. Lu's residence, with Greenbird in the grip.

At one corner nearby, a very average-looking man witnessed everything with his own eyes. In excitement... or rather fear he switched on the communicator with his quivering fingers, "Greetings..." In courtesy he spoke, "...Mhm... Yes I saw it with my own eyes. I swear. Yes, it's the mech, yes, 2 faces and 4 arms. I saw it very clearly, it has to be it! Yes, exactly the same as the hologram visual we had gotten. Mhm, right, he is currently at Ancient Rock Street-753. Okay, he had just entered the building... I wonder what in the Haleyson he's doing..." The man stayed quiet for a moment, listening to the question before he carried on speaking, "I did not see his face. Sorry. I am very sorry. Yes he was in a mech, that was why I can't see his face... Mhm... he also killed the 5 mechs. It was horrible! I must tell you! It's totally sinister! ...Mhm, mhm, alright, thank you very much! Thank you sir! Thank you so much! I am always loyal to the organization, striving to contribute to the

organization with better forces! Thank you for considering a recommendation to the leader! Thank you! Mhm, uh huh... yes! I will stay guard! I will guard this place with my life! No, no, it is what I should do always to serve you sir! Yes... truthfully yes! Good bye!"

He hung up. His eyes were fixed on the entrance of the building!

Chapter 122: Doctor Lu

"Ye, be careful. There is a 0.3 percent concentration of gaseous neurotoxin in the air, and it has a strong knockout effect! Hmm, there are three people unconscious already. I have not found the source of this toxin!" Mu warned Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was surprised. "A gaseous toxin? Someone released it?"

"Yes. The culprit is unknown, their objective is unknown. However, you're not in danger, don't worry!" Mu explained plainly.

Ye Chong had only a hazy idea of the situation. "Oh, I know that. Yu Di is fully sealed. But, Mu, what do you think happened?"

"While I did not see it happen, I believe the following deductions can be made - the people in need of treatment required a doctor's services, but they were not welcomed by doctors themselves. Coercion became necessary to make the doctor yield to their request. This is the most likely scenario. However, there is also the possibility of a more complicated and unexpected sequence of events!" Mu replied.

"Aren't doctors responsible to treat anyone in need?"

"That is basically accurate!"

"Since it's the same routine of treating someone, then there's nothing different in treating these people!"

Mu agreed. "That is so. However, a doctor has the right to choose his patients. This is common knowledge!"

"Right?" Ye Chong was confused.

"Yes. While a person's rights should ideally not be violated, they will be ignored when those rights were in conflict with another person's interests! Once a conflict occurs, it's up to the capabilities of both parties to resolve their differences, the result of which will

determine if those rights could be defended!" Mu explained insightfully.

"Hmm, the most important thing is still a person's capabilities! These rights are ultimately pointless. In the end, it still comes down to a fight!" Ye Chong spoke with contempt.

"That may be true, up to a certain level. However, physical strength is not the most powerful, nor the most dominating. It is only a demonstration of one's basic capabilities, and is limited in application. The power of social relations and wisdom are more formidable! However, these may be a little too difficult for you now!" Mu stated plainly.

"Oh, is that right? But I think physical strength is the most important part, and easier to make use of!" Ye Chong did not fully agree with the mech.

"Hmm, that's because you're not familiar the rules of this society. Using these rules to your advantage will be too hard for you. You'll have to take it slowly. In this respect, perhaps Shang would be better suited for it!" Mu recommended Shang to Ye Chong!

"Shang? That bastard, I can only hope he stays out of trouble!" The thought of Mu's alter ego brought a headache to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong and Mu exchanged their thoughts as he maneuvered the mech into the room.

The room was not too large. Yu Di made a wide hole in the wall and entered easily. The people in the room were all unconscious. As for waking them up, Ye Chong had no idea how. He was suddenly reminded of the fact that the mech pilot in the Greenbird he captured had escaped from here, and must have known more about what happened.

The wide opening in the wall coupled with airflow ejected from Yu Di swiftly dispersed the toxic air from the room .

Ye Chong tossed the Greenbird onto the ground and spoke coldly

through Yu Di's audio amplifier, "Come out!"

Greenbird collapsed on the ground in an awkward splay, laying still for a long moment.

Ye Chong knitted his brows, seeing the unresponsive mech. He whipped out Yu Di's dagger and disassembles the low level Greenbird's armor.

In that moment, Greenbird's cabin opened in a swish, and a person wobbled out of the mech.

Apparently, when Yu Di released the Greenbird roughly onto the ground, the mech's simplistic design with its mediocre hydraulic suspension system could not shield the pilot from the fall, despite the unremarkable falling distance. Greenbird's pilot was dizzy from the fall, and could not respond to Ye Chong. Upon recovery, he looked right into the terrifying mech's dagger. It shocked him to no end, as he panicked and made a hasty exit from the pilot's cabin.

The guy before him was an unsympathetic killer. He had personally witnessed the five mechs outside crushed in an instant by him. Despite his vast experience in violent combat, this was the most bloody scene he had ever witnessed. Mech fragments mixed with blood and gore on the floor, making for a most unforgettable nightmare!

The guy was a murderous devil!

He stood in fear before the terrifying mech, face drained of color. Cold sweat rolled down his brows, and his legs shivered in protest.

Ye Chong took a good look at the person. He was thin as a stick, tall and pale. It could be his natural look, or the result of shock. He seemed like a studious person. "No wonder he's so bad at piloting," Ye Chong thought to himself.

Ye Chong watched through the holographic screen at the three people lying on the ground, and asked, "Which of these three is

Doctor Lu?"

The man paused momentarily before stuttering, "That, that would be me!" He immediately turned a few shades paler, fearful for whatever possible enmity the guy harboured towards him! He was beginning to regret his unbridled arrogance all this while. This was his retribution for all of his offences against others!

His declaration surprised Ye Chong. He did not expect this unremarkable looking man to be his target, Doctor Lu.

Ye Chong opened the pilot's cabin and jumped to the ground under Doctor Lu's frightful stare. "To jump down from so high up and remain unscathed, is he human?" Doctor Lu felt his heart tightened.

"Oh, you're Doctor Lu?" Contrary to Doctor Lu's expectations of a fearsome looking brute, the young man before him was lean and tall, not muscular in the least, and even seemed to be a tad refined. Even his voice was not overbearing, but the apathy and somberness in it warned Doctor Lu against causing trouble.

"Yes, I am, and you are?" Doctor Lu asked cautiously.

The young man did not reply, but asked, "Are these your foes or friends?"

The sight of the people lying on the ground sparked a burning fury in Doctor Lu. He spoke through gritted teeth, "Enemies! Definitely enemies!"

"Right!" The detached young man plainly acknowledged before moving towards the three men. Under Doctor Lu's unsuspecting gaze, he produced a dagger and moved quickly. A slit of blood appeared on the throats of the three men. In two seconds, blood sprayed out of the three men's throats simultaneously, red blooming on the floor, a most chilling sight!

Doctor Lu drew a cold breath, his eyes filled with terror. What little color that returned to his face now receded again. His slightly

agape mouth was speechless. Doctor Lu swallowed hard, and unconsciously felt his own throat.

Ye Chong's expression did not change. Those three were Doctor Lu's enemies, and obviously with the five that he killed outside. Let there be no loose ends - Ye Chong believed in this principle.

Ye Chong's ruthless methods had obviously terrified Doctor Lu.

It was a pity for these three men. One of them was even the leader of a significant local gang, who now died by Ye Chong's hands, unaware of his fate till the end. Ye Chong did not know that a small move on his part had disrupted the local power hierarchy. However, even if he knew about it, he would probably not think much of it.

After dealing with the three, Ye Chong turned and walked towards Doctor Lu. "Alright, no one's going to bother us now! Let's talk business, I'd like to seek treatment from you!"

"Treatment?" Doctor Lu's tight vigilance finally loosened a notch. He knew that his safety would not be at risk in the near future.

"Yes!" Ye Chong replied.

"Then please come this way!" Doctor Lu had no intentions of bargaining. Only someone crazy would risk offending the merciless person before him, and Doctor Lu believed himself to be some average guy, lacking the courage to test the patience of this young man.

For a moment, he felt sad for the cold bodies lying on the ground. Despite their strength, they had died unconscious. However, he quickly gathered himself - with this, his sister's death was finally avenged!

His younger sister had died under the hands of that bastard, and that was why he stubbornly refused to treat him! He had planned to kill those horrible miscreants himself after using the

neurotoxin, but his teacher's words haunted him. As a doctor, the blade in hand must never be used to kill! These were the final words his teacher left him before he passed away.

He could not bring himself to use his blade. After a hard struggle with himself, he decided to escape instead.

Without his treatment, the man would die in a year or two.

"Consider it punishment from the Gods!" He consoled himself so.

However, even that one year or two was snatched away by a murderer that came out of nowhere. The taste of vengeance was sweet and satisfying!

As he indulged in his reverie, they approached their destination.

Behind a door was the treatment room.

This was Ye Chong's first time seeing a professional treatment room. The room was incredibly spacious. Unlike the brick structures outside, there were metals and all sorts of composite materials. Bright and spotless alloys shone with a silver-white luster. Clever arrangements of the soft white lighting eliminated any shadows cast by those present in the room. This prevented any difficulties in treatment due to shading, such as poor eyesight.

Ye Chong could sense that the air in the room was a lot cleaner compared to outside. The facilities were also clean to a fault.

There were many medical apparatus in the treatment room, their complexity a pleasant surprise to Ye Chong, who was proficient in mechanics. To compare mechs with these apparatus, the former would be broad strokes from a thick brush, while the latter would be intricate sketches from a fine pencil.

Once he stepped into the room, Doctor Lu was like an entirely different person. His fearfulness earlier had vanished, replaced with easy calmness and solemnity.

"First, please lie in the magnetic imaging pod! I'll do a full body

examination!" Doctor Lu spoke calmly, as though he was only speaking to an ordinary patient.

Chapter 123: Examination

Ye Chong sat opposite the table where Doctor Lu occupied it. On the table was a thumb-sized silver-ish metallic pyramid, marked with an aperture in the center. The protrusion was embedded in the composite material that made up the table. Above the aperture, suspended in midair, was a seemingly illogical mesh of colorful threads, intertwined with each other like long, vividly colored thread-worms playfully chasing each other.

Doctor Lu studied the colors through tightly knitted brows, with his unblinking eyes. The more he studied it, the more he frowned, until he finally bowed his head, deep in thought. These threads held the results of the many tests endured by Ye Chong, and the basis for Doctor Lu's diagnosis.

Ye Chong did not disturb him, knowing that the doctor must be in a quandary. Ye Chong himself was a stranger to medicine, and since he could not lend a hand, he chatted with Mu instead.

After a quarter of an hour, Doctor Lu coughed softly, and brought Ye Chong back from his discussions with Mu.

Ye Chong looked at Doctor Lu calmly, but was in fact anxious inside. This strange illness was a bane for him. Even with his tough character, he had occasionally pondered on ending his own life!

Doctor Lu spoke in all seriousness, "Alright, let us discuss this problem of yours!"

Ye Chong nodded almost imperceptibly, and his face did not betray his feelings. "Okay, let's have it!" Doctor Lu recognised the indifference found only in patients who understood that their conditions were incurable and fatal. However, with current medical advancements, such diseases were getting rarer, and Doctor Lu himself had only seen a few cases of them thus far. This was why their indifferent demeanor left a strong impression on him.

"Of course, this is only a preliminary examination. Those threads are only for reference, and do not have the final say in things! Besides, we should also consider the exact nature of your request." Doctor Lu spoke with great delicacy.

"Understood!" Ye Chong nodded and said.

Doctor Lu's expression was a little uncertain, and he spoke after some hesitation, "Your condition is peculiar!"

"Oh?"

"From the holographic threads display, your body is physically healthy, with quite a few qualities that are a few times, or perhaps a dozen times augmented from the average person's. Take for example, the power of your muscles and the general durability of your body muscle tissue. One can say that you're almost superhuman! This is also something I find quite strange. Your body is, in many ways, far superior to any human born in the current age. However, I am not an expert in this matter, or I'll definitely keep you here as my favourite experiment." Doctor Lu smiled congenially.

Ye Chong affected a look of attention to his words.

"There are many parts of your threads that are very different from the average person's, hence the diagnosis is difficult! I can only deduce your condition based on my own professional point of view. While many aspects look odd, what struck me odd the most was your Sima curves from points one to four. I believe that this may hold the key to explaining your body's condition! Of course, this is only one possibility. After all, the human body is extremely complicated. Even tiny changes can lead to oddities in the threads. Moreover, your body is already quite unique in many ways."

"Sima curves?" The terminology was unknown to Ye Chong.

"Yes, Sima curves are a little complicated to explain, but they're mostly related to the body's endocrine system and hormones and

so on. From the curves, I believe you may be reacting adversely to some kind of hormones that you've taken. As a doctor, this term may not be very accurate, but I can't find a better word for it" Doctor Lu's face with tinted with some embarrassment.

"Hormones?" Ye Chong felt his chest tightened.

"Yes. While I may not understand the whole picture, I am quite certain that you must have taken some kind of hormones, or something similar to it." He explained further, "You should know that this is actually my specialty, and my teacher was a forefront expert in this field!"

"It's possible!" Ye Chong recalled the silver liquid on Black Cove, and described it in great detail. He also talked about what he felt after being immersed in it, and the details of his episodes in the past. Doctor Lu listened intently and posed some questions along the way.

The doctor pondered over the situation for long moments, but turned apologetic in the end. "Sir, I am certain that your physical condition is related to that silver liquid you described. However, I had never heard of any hormones that can block a person's brainwaves. I'm not even entirely sure now if this silver liquid is anything like hormones. However, I can recommend my teacher to you, I believe he would probably be able to enlighten you on your condition."

"Your teacher?"

"Yes!" Doctor Lu's expression turned to one of admiration. "His surname is Wang, and he is a leading expert in the field. Besides that, he is also very knowledgeable in other areas related to the human body. I believe that he would be extremely helpful in understanding your condition."

"Alright, how can I find your teacher?"

"Hmm, I have not seen my teacher for years. If nothing

unexpected occurred, he should still be at the Windstar Hospital, you can try there. His name is Wang Weixing, a prominent character, you should be able to look him up easily in the virtual world. However, first, you must be able to pass at least five of the local sanctuary's tests to be able to leave the Orbits. As far as I know, the Orbits does not have any experts in this field. Of course, it is possible that there may be lesser known recluses in the Orbits who fit the criteria!" Doctor Lu explained, but his tone implied that he did not really believe in the existence of such recluses.

"The sanctuary's tests? Five of them?" This was the first time Ye Chong had heard of them.

Doctor Lu looked at Ye Chong with surprise. "Yes! Don't you know about them?"

"Hmm, I'm quite new here!"

"I see!" Doctor Lu realized his situation and explained, "To leave the Orbits, you'll need starships, but all the starships are controlled by the mentalist sanctuary. For those who wish to leave the Orbits, the sanctuary had set the rule that, if one can pass five of their tests, they will issue their starship to send the successful person away from the Orbits and back to the Five Galaxies."

"Right!" Ye Chong began to understand, and asked, "What do they test you on?"

"Anything you're good at. But not many passed the tests, only a few are able to every year. Well, at least I've never seen any of them!"

"I see, if that's the case, then farewell!" Ye Chong turned to leave.

"Oh, farewell!" Doctor Lu paused for a moment before replying in kind. Looking at Ye Chong's lonely, receding figure, Doctor Lu was once again reminded of his merciless nature, and shuddered as cold sweat rolled down his back. Seeing Ye Chong's figure becoming smaller and smaller, unlikely to return, Doctor Lu

couldn't help but exhale in relief, rejoicing in the fact that he had not offended the murderer.

"Mu, do you think the doctor's right?" Ye Chong asked.

"I have very little information in this respect and cannot determine that. However, he was not lying, that's for sure!" Mu replied.

"Not lying?" Ye Chong grew curious. "How'd you know he's not?"

"Based on Shang's curated information in psychology, if a person is lying, there will be obvious changes in the person's pulse rate, rate of blood flow and brain wave intensity. He was normal in these respects just now. That is the basis of my deduction that he was not lying!" Mu explained at his own steady pace.

"Is that a reliable way?" Ye Chong was skeptical.

"Only if Shang's curated information is accurate!" Mu continued further, "Of course, with some training, these signs can be minimized, but they cannot be entirely eliminated. This is widely agreed upon in the field of psychology, I believe it's highly reliable."

"Hmm, if that's the case, then this way of deduction is quite useful!" Ye Chong seemed to be absorbed in thought, before smiling and say, "I didn't think Shang would collect some information, it's really unexpected!"

"That last comment of yours, Shang has a few words to say about them, wanna hear it?" It seemed that Mu was very interested in what Shang had to say under his hood, and had turned to a more human-like way of speaking.

The thought of Shang's incessant blabbering brought an instant headache to Ye Chong. He immediately protested for mercy, "Please no! There's a high chance that he'll trigger another episode, I am not blacking out here!"

"Ye, you forgot to pay for the doctor's services!" Mu prompted Ye

Chong.

"Er, payment, that's a big problem! You got any suggestions?"

"None!" Mu replied in his clear-cut manner.

"Oh well!" Ye Chong shrugged carelessly, and walked on without turning back. On Blue ocean, life was peaceful, and Ye Chong had tried desperately to fit in with the normal way of life. However, a series of battles had ensued, and Ye Chong realized that power was the most important factor for survival. The so-called societal norms were useless to him. On the Orbits, life was a mess of struggles, and people fought to survive. It was as if he was back on the trash planet. However, his opponents were no longer mutants, but humans just like him.

The so-called social norms never did have a deep hold on Ye Chong, and now, they were carelessly cast away.

Ye Chong deployed Yu Di and slipped into the pilot's cabin. Since the door was too small, Ye Chong exited through the wide opening in the wall that he created earlier.

Just as he was on the other side of the wall, something caught him off guard!

Suddenly, his vision was filled with numerous bright spots, and Ye Chong, unable to react in time, could only see white everywhere, blinded by the light!

Not good!

Pow! A loud bang, and Ye Chong felt like he was flying through the clouds!

The sensation was familiar to him - Yu Di was hit, and was now flying off due to the attack!

"I am being ambushed!" Ye Chong finally realised!

Chapter 124: Is this the End?

Why did Mu not warn him?

There was no time to ponder further. In the seconds right after Yu Di was hit, Ye Chong's hands were like the wind! While his eyes were blinded by the strong glare, he maneuvered the mech without delay due to his familiarity with Yu Di. The speed of his fingers undeterred by the momentary blindness as his hands moved smoothly.

If one were to witness his act from aside, they would not have believed that this was Ye Chong's first time using the controls based only on his sense of touch.

The Non-orderly Wavy Leap!

This was the only advanced evasion technique Ye Chong knew of. He chose this technique, the one that he was most familiar with, without much thought!

Ye Chong had no idea where he was truly headed due to his blindness - this was the true Non-orderly Wave Leap! Ye Chong silently counted the seconds in which he switched directions every time, trying to minimize this duration.

This was not a wide clearing, but a populated neighborhood, where houses were densely packed.

Ye Chong moved in random directions, his mech scraping along the ground in its flight, running into houses and destroying them. The brick houses were brittle, and kicked up swirling dust upon impact. However, Ye Chong was blinded, and could not take advantage of the fact.

Nonetheless, his hindered sight did not imply his blindness to the situation. After all, Mu was here!

"Ye, turn 30 degrees to the left!" Mu and Ye Chong communicated through brain waves, their exchange faster than words.

By now, Ye Chong's super reflexes were utilized to their fullest. With just his sense of touch, Ye Chong performed the maneuver.

Ye Chong intently focused, ready for Mu's next instruction! Right now, the only one Ye Chong could rely on was Mu! Mu was now his eyes!

"Hmm, good sense of touch, your error is below 3 degrees!" Mu offered a rare compliment to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong, awaiting intently for Mu's next instruction, did not expect Mu to be in the mood for such comments in the current dire situation, and did not know whether to laugh or cry about it. Could Mu be under Shang's bad influence?

The sound of crackling explosions did not cease, an indication of the enemy's violent firepower! Who could possibly want to kill him?

However, this was not the time to think on the question. Mu spoke abruptly, "Ready for impact!"

Ye Chong dreaded, and held his body together tightly. Bang! The loud noise was heard, and Ye Chong shook all over, his hands gripping on the controls, feeling Yu Di's violent shuddering!

"Stop!" Mu suddenly shouted.

Ye Chong's hard-earned fundamental training saved his life in that moment. He did not lose control of Yu Di, despite the mech receiving a violent impact while moving at a high speed! A perfect stop! Perfect, despite the circumstances. However, this difficult maneuver was also equally destructive to Ye Chong's body.

Ye Chong was dizzy from the sudden rush of blood to his head. Nonetheless, the discomfort vanished quickly! Ye Chong did not know that, if it was some other average pilot, that sudden stop would probably have claimed the pilot's life.

Rumble!

The sound of explosion came from 5 meters ahead of Ye Chong. From that point, about 5 meters in front of Ye Chong, reaching up to thirty meters further ahead, the entire area was blasted to dust from numerous energy based weapons!

The blast wave from the violent explosion nearly tipped Yu Di off its feet.

Ye Chong felt the pain in his eyes eased substantially. He could not help but try to open them into a slit, as a dim ray of light entered his vision. While he could not see clearly, it still gave him an idea of what was before him. This was heartening to Ye Chong.

"Ye, blink your eyes a few times!" Mu prompted Ye Chong.

Ye Chong did as told, and the objects in his vision became clearer. Ye Chong was overjoyed. He now realised that the eyes were fragile things, and losing one's sight was an absolutely terrifying experience. In those tens of seconds earlier, if Mu had not been by his side, he believed that his life would not be for him to decide.

With his vision restored, Ye Chong grew more confident, and he was no longer defenseless. The first thing he saw before him was a huge crater, and he was inside a building. The building had lost half its structure, and what was left of it was also on the verge of crumbling down, little rocks and dust falling from above from time to time.

"We have a situation!" Mu, who had never said anything like that, now spoke with worry.

"What is it?" Ye Chong asked anxiously.

"We're surrounded! There are 25 mechs in total. From the models and weapons, I believe they are a class above the MPA's Messengers. Unfortunately, the enemy had solely used long range weapons to suppress us. The probability of breaking through their formation is below 7 percent. Fortunately, they seem to intend to capture you alive!" Mu's words had the effect of drenching Ye

Chong in iced water.

The sound of explosions did not stop, and were slowly closing in on their location.

"What are they doing?" Ye Chong asked, perplexed.

Mu replied evenly, "They are clearing the area of any obstacles, restricting your area of movement!"

That was a ruthless move. Ye Chong could not, for the moment, come up with a countermove to hinder their suppressive tactics.

With no good ideas in mind, Ye Chong began to examine Yu Di. The mech was heavily damaged, its arm with the laser spear gone. Fortunately, the mech's main body was not severely damaged.

The opponent was unscrupulous. The neighborhood was like hell on earth, corpses lying everywhere! The locals ran and screamed on the streets, but were mercilessly shot through by the many heat rays and laser beams. Even Ye Chong, used to the loss of lives, couldn't help but watch the bloody scene with sympathy. He looked up to see Doctor Lu's treatment room now turned into a huge crater. Given the circumstances, Ye Chong believed that even he could not have survived it.

The sky around the area was occupied by many spectating mechs, but none dared to make their move. The formidable force of the perpetrators, mechs one class above the MPA's Messengers, were enough to make them stop in their tracks. Besides, this was in the lawless and bloodthirsty Orbits!

The place was like a hunting ground, if you were powerful enough!

Without any geographical cover, short range mechs were hopeless against long range mechs. Moreover, these were the most powerful long range mechs that Ye Chong had ever seen. Their massive firepower and terrifying accuracy carved deep into Ye Chong's memories.

If it were only one or two of them, Ye Chong believed he still stood a chance. However, Mu had said they were 25 of them. Ye Chong was certain that, should he make himself visible, he would be the target of all attacks. From the MPA's track record, the probability of missing would be less than 1 percent.

Could it be that he was finally going to die here?

Despite the circumstances, Ye Chong did not feel hopeless or gloomy. He had always struggled between the fates of life and death on the trash planet. Even if he died this time, it was nothing incredible!

The sounds of explosions were getting nearer and nearer, almost in rhythm with his heartbeat!

Ye Chong suddenly remembered something, and asked Mu, "Mu, why didn't you notice the enemy this time?" He was not blaming Mu, it was just that he had not met anyone that was able to avoid Mu's scans. This made him very curious, especially since the enemy was a group of 25.

Mu explained, "They must have used some special device that tricks scanning systems. It's very advanced, but I suspect they are not fully developed, since the effective range of coverage is very small. I could sense their positions once you were flung back about 10 meters from being hit earlier. They must have discovered our locations beforehand, or the trick would not have worked!" The mech paused before continuing, "However, the trick was undoubtedly successful this time!"

"There's something like that?" Ye Chong's eyes widened in disbelief.

"Yes, probably still in their experimental stage. My database does not have anything on these kinds of weapons!" Mu deduced.

"So they want to capture me alive?" Ye Chong thought it odd. The firepower was heavy, but not intended to kill him, or the gradually

approaching firepower now would be an unnecessary move. Ye Chong remembered clearly that they were equipped with the highly destructive nanowave guns, but had not seen them use it! If they wanted to take his life, the size of their group was also unreasonably big!

"Based on what's happened so far, the probability is high!" Mu agreed.

"Then that's just strange, why would they want me alive? After that last encounter with Sabre, I can understand why they would want me dead, but why send so many people to capture me alive? This inefficient way of doing things is not very like them!" Ye Chong muttered to himself. Despite the seemingly hopeless situation, Ye Chong was still as clear as winter frost.

"It is strange, the only explanation is that you're valuable to them alive!" Mu continued his train of thought.

"Valuable to them alive? That makes sense! Then what's my value to them?" Ye Chong bowed his head, deep in thought. If he could understand the enemy's objectives, it would be advantageous for him. He might even be able to find a way to survive this. Ye Chong replayed all the events related to the MPA in his head, hoping to identify their motives.

Suddenly, Ye Chong noticed something. He remembered the time when he infiltrated their warship, and all their mechs had pursued him viciously. The enemy's target had been Fred the Great. Even if he could cause great damage to them, and if the enemy could accomplish their mission, then the mission would have been their priority. However, they had abandoned their mission to pursue him. It was not just one of them, but nearly all of the mechs had set their eyes on him. This could only mean that they had found him to be more valuable to them than Fred the Great!

Nonetheless, how could he possibly be of use to them?

Chapter 125: The Guardian Ring

Ye Chong's mind was racing, recalling every single moment of that incident.

It had all happened after he infiltrated the enemy's warship. In those moments, what could have happened that led the MPA to want him so badly? In the warship ... Ye Chong abruptly recalled the person on the bridge, Gu Shaoze! That's right! It must be him! He had given him a ring before he died, and there was a password for it. If not for the protection afforded by the ring, he would have died. Why would the MPA want to capture him? Could it be ...

Ye Chong quickly went through his bag. He exhaled in relief, finding the ring. He carefully took out the ring given to him by Gu Shaoze and examined it closely. Whether by its design or material, the ring was unremarkable. However, he remembered how Gu Shaoze had hidden the ring on him to protect it, and Ye Chong felt that there must be more to the ring than he thought.

To say that this object was a ring might not be entirely accurate. It was only made up of two metallic wires intertwined with each other. The only interesting thing about the ring was that there were no welding marks - each metallic wire must have been welded at their ends to form the ring, but Ye Chong could not find any signs of the welding marks on the wires.

"What could this ring be? Maybe this is what the MPA is looking for!" Ye Chong immediately realized the truth of things, and knew where his worth lay with the enemy.

Ye Chong remembered that Gu Shaoze had told him a password, but how did the code actually work? Ye Chong spent long moments finding ways to activate the ring using the password, without success. The ring was like a unified entity, without anything spectacular to it. Ye Chong caressed the surface of the ring repeatedly to no effect.

He tried putting the ring on each of his fingers. When the ring was fitted into his right ring finger, the stubbornly inert ring finally reacted!

"Thank you for using Guardian. Since your brain wave is not recognised as a superuser, please provide your access level password!" The bright and sweet voice was tinged with a little bashfulness, and Ye Chong thought it sounded familiar. It did not take him long to realize that it was the voice of the golden haired escort of Gu Shaoze. From the way it sounded, it did not take a genius to notice that she must have felt blissful when recording it!

For some reason, the word "blissful" triggered a strong reaction in Ye Chong. He thought of his papa, Grandpa Qian, little Nan Nan, Hei Zi ... The images of these people flashed through his mind. Ye Chong was struck with a deep melancholy, as though he was bound to leave them all behind, wandering about the universe like a rootless duckweed.

The sensitive Mu noticed Ye Chong's emotional changes and asked, "Ye, what's wrong?"

Ye Chong abruptly broke his chain of thoughts and could not help but gave a soundless laugh. How could he have such weird thoughts in this difficult situation? Beside, weren't Mu and Shang always with him? Their company was absolute, no matter where and when!

Ye Chong spoke softly, "It's nothing, Mu, I was just distracted!"

"Please provide your access level password!" Number Two's sweet voice rang again.

Ye Chong gathered himself and spoke out loud, "Number Two!"

Puff, a soft ring, and Ye Chong's vision shifted! A three-dimensional image, composed of numerous invisibly tiny grids, spun about in his vision, as a massive volume of analytic information had burst through like a waterfall! Ye Chong's pupils

dilated in response to the stimulation, as he desperately absorbed the incoming information. As though sensing Ye Chong's efforts, the information came in faster as the spinning 3D grid showed new changes on its scanning results. Some points of interest were zoomed in or out and locked on, and the analysis results for these points were presented.

Everything was too fast! In less than ten seconds, Ye Chong already felt his eyes slightly fatigued! Being used to colourful holographic displays, the black-and-white 3D grid was a little uncomfortable to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong's vision could only recognize two colors - black and white!

Halting his efforts in absorbing the new information, Ye Chong looked around him to see where he was. However, as soon as he turned his head, his vision changed abruptly, and the analysed targets from earlier were replaced with new images! Ye Chong's sharp mind noticed immediately that the image was now displaying Yu Di's pilot cabin!

Could it be that he was still in the cabin?

"Mu, what's happening?" Ye Chong's vision was still in black and white, devoid of any other colours!

Fortunately, Ye Chong and Mu's brainwave link was unaffected. Mu's usually plain voice was now with a touch of awe, "Ye, you're now in a miniature mech. It's really unexpected, that someone could build a miniature mech of this level! It's incredible!"

"Miniature mech?" Ye Chong remembered putting a dent in Number Two's miniature mech. It left a deep impression on him.

"Yes. This mech has tight security, and I can't scan it. You'll have to figure it out yourself. Hmm, based on the rate at which the firepower are closing in, you have about 2 minutes. I will control Yu Di!" Mu suggested reasonably.

"What?" Feng Su was flabbergasted with the news!

"Hmm, yes, based on our information, they're having a special operation. They have sent out 25 mechs, all one class above the Messengers! Who'd have thought they would be so reckless! News of their warship was just only exposed, and now they are bringing so many of them to the Orbits! This person must be very important to them. This is the video we have just received!" These words came from an old man with a face full of wrinkles, donning a green robe.

In the video were the 25 mechs surrounding Doctor Lu's treatment room in ambush, their positions boldly highlighted!

"What are your orders?" Feng Su's eyes shone with uncertainty.

"Your mission this time is divided into 2 parts. Firstly, we must have this person, and secondly, we'll demonstrate our strength to the MPA! This is our territory, and we will not allow such arrogance!" The green-robed elder humphed coldly, as a chilling gleam flashed in his eyes.

Feng Su felt her chest tighten, and asked cautiously, "How far should we go?"

"That's up to you. All in all, we must demonstrate our strength without straining our relationship with the MPA too much. Most importantly, we must get this person in our hands! They have acted so insolently and freely on the Orbits, and must be taught a lesson! The opponent is stronger this time, the higher-ups have decided to send you 30 Dawn mechs. Any questions?" The green-robed elder spoke with great dignity.

Feng Su was startled. It seemed that the higher-ups were keen this time. With 30 Dawns, it must be the largest operation in these past few years! With 30 Dawns under her lead, Feng Su believed that she could definitely defeat her opponents. However, with this, the peace between them would be disrupted!

Only someone in direct contact with the higher-ups like her would understand the power of the three forces, and the formidable supporters they have behind them! Feng Su had come from them, and no one knew more than she did of the dangerous undercurrent under the apparent peace!

All this time, the three forces had restrained themselves. Now, MPA's operation was no different than a declaration of war!

Who was their target? Who could make the MPA send out their squads in large numbers and risk war with the Orbits? As far as she knew, the three forces had always kept their calm. Even the battle-hungry Black Cove would not act so freely! This only showed that their target must be worth the risk! The higher-ups must have reached the same conclusion, and decided to get this person at all costs, even using a trump card like her!

Dawn models were the lowest level mechs in Orbits' main force, on the same level with the MPA's Messengers and Black Cove's Cosmic Flare. The tripedal beast had a unique sense of balance, with speed and firepower between that of Black Cove and the MPA. However, when paired with the sanctuary's pilots, it would be as powerful as the Messenger or the Cosmic Flare. Its green exterior made the mech, with an animal facade, looked more like a real beast. However, unlike the menace of Black Cove and the elegance of the MPA, Dawn had a touch of nature to it.

Feng Su's purple mech stood out amongst the green Dawns. This was the elite mech famous amongst the three forces - Wings of Nirvana. Like a work of art, the mech shone with a purple, metallic gleam. Its 72 tiny lateral fins could arrange themselves flexibly like the layers of feathers on a bird's wings. This allowed more freedom in movement for Wings of Nirvana, but demanded equally high maneuvering skills from its pilot. The elegant design had a natural quality to it, with a combination of short and long range weapons for a balanced performance. With a mentalist like Feng Su, an ace to pilot the mech, Wings of Nirvana was now a formidable

opponent with unimaginable potential.

Feng Su arranged the 30 Dawns to be in teams, and surrounded the area. They were grouped into three squads, hiding in obscure corners, waiting for the perfect time for an ambush. Feng Su knew that, for the elders, the MPA's target was their main priority. It was not particularly important to launch a crackdown on the MPA. Beside, if they could get their hands on the MPA's target, it would already be a severe blow to their opponent!

Feng Su's decision was unquestionable. With the legendary Wings of Nirvana as their leader, who would dare to voice an objection?

They were like a pack of hunters, furtively observing the situation!

Chapter 126: Fish and Net I

The attacks outside were closing in, slowly but surely.

Inside the almost-crumbling building, things were not as calm as it seemed. Like its heavily bruised exterior, the inside was littered with holes. A thoroughly golden colored humanoid was constantly moving around in the building; the walls were like paper-thin barriers, never hindering the humanoid's movement. The astonishing fact was that, despite the heavy damage inflicted, the half-building structure was still standing, and one could not help but applaud the brick structure's admirable stability.

However, if an architect were to witness this, they would have been flabbergasted. The damages were all inflicted at places that would not affect the half-building's main structure, as though they were all the result of stringent calculations. What was left of the building had a shifted center of gravity, and its support structure was heavily vandalized, but just as the building's collapse seemed imminent, the golden humanoid's "renovations" greatly reduced the probability of collapse!

That golden humanoid was Ye Chong.

One could not help but commend Gu Shaoze's ingenuity! The miniature mech was spectacularly designed, and even Mu could not deduce much of the mech's functioning principles.

Miniature mechs were a branch of mech design, unappreciated throughout its existence, researched by only a few aristocratic families; and Gu Shaoze's miniature mech, Guardian, was entirely different from the average miniature mech.

Guardian looked like a space suit. The metallic faceplate pressed against Ye Chong's face, with an odd pair of eyes in alternating silver and black. His head was fitted with a cover of the same metallic make, and the insides were fitted with an advanced scanning system. The shoulders armors were tough, and Ye Chong

could only regret on the lack of barbs on the armors. The main engine was spread across his lower back; the engine's power surprised Ye Chong when he first activated it.

The most inexplicable feature was that every joint of the Guardian was equipped with auxiliary engines. These auxiliary engines were not used for direction maneuvering, but to amplify the mech's strength. With Guardian, Ye Chong's strength was now nothing short of astounding. With a short burst, Ye Chong could accelerate to an astonishing Mach 10! Even Harmony of the Winter Aria could only reach a maximum of Mach 7, and the average starship could only fly at Mach 3 or 4.

With Guardian on him, Ye Chong could now attack with the force of an average mech! One should know that an average mech was about 10 meters tall, and giants like Yu Di could even reach to an astonishing 20 meters. Guardian, however, was only slightly less than 2 meters tall. With such a large difference in size, the chances of Guardian being locked on and hit decreased greatly.

While offering such outstanding physical abilities, the mech also required good piloting skills. Perhaps only someone like Ye Chong, with nearly inhuman abilities and an incredulously robust physique could pilot this superior mech. Due to spatial constraint, besides the inherent cushioning property of the unknown metal that made up Guardian's main body, there virtually were no suspension systems for the mech! With an acceleration from at rest to Mach 10 in 1.2 seconds, the force due to the abrupt change in velocity would have squeezed the guts out of a normal person!

Weaponry was Guardian's weakness. The 2 daggers by its thighs left Ye Chong a little disappointed. The daggers were sized like the ones used by humans in combat; can such tiny weapons pierce through mech armor? The brass knuckles also seemed suitable only for human combat, and not one between mechs! It seemed that Gu Shaoze had only designed the mech for his skillful combatant of an escort, the golden haired Number Two, and did

not emphasize much on weaponry.

Guardian - the name was fitting for the mech!

Ye Chong was completely covered in the luster of golden metal, in a mech with a modern design. If not for the luster unique to metals, Ye Chong would have suspected the mech to be made of something non-metallic. Ye Chong could even feel the softness of the metallic faceplate; pressed against his face, the faceplate changed according to his facial expressions. Could this malleable metal be any good for defense? Ye Chong was highly suspicious!

There were too many things that perplexed Ye Chong, but he did not have the time just now to explore them. The sounds of explosions were approaching, and the blast waves shook the vulnerably swaying building, with small rocks and dust falling from above!

Time was too short! If he had more time, Ye Chong believed that he could, with the help of Guardian and Mu, break through the opponent's surrounding formation. It was a pity that he remembered too late about the inconspicuous ring that Gu Shaoze handed to him before he died! Nonetheless, regret was not a good habit. Ye Chong pulled himself together and meticulously went through his experience in controlling Guardian.

Abruptly, Ye Chong stopped, and listened. "Huh?" The enemy's attacks now felt different to Ye Chong; they were more disorganized and not rhythmic as before. What happened?

Just then, Mu spoke urgently, "Ye, something's happened, get ready to move!"

"There was only one small area left, the enemy's target must be inside! Hmm, their shooting rhythm has slowed down!" As she noticed some of the enemy's mechs had stopped shooting, Feng Su knew that it was now time to move!

10 Dawn mechs broke through the enemy's formation under Feng

Su's order!

The sudden intrusion broke the rhythm of the MPA mechs, but they reacted swiftly - almost immediately, 10 Messengers flew in to engage. Without any unnecessary forewarnings, tens of nanowave beams were shot towards the Dawn mechs! Another 10 of the MPA's mechs rushed towards the last piece of standing structure in the area!

The two sides were obviously familiar with each other, and fought without hesitation. Then 10 Dawn mechs flew like butterflies amongst the flowers, flying forwards, backwards, or crossing with each other. The nanowave beams shot through the spaces between the Dawn mechs as they flew about in a seemingly irregular pattern, but completely avoiding the attack.

The round of fire left the enemy unscathed, and the MPA's arrogant Messengers were shocked!

MPA was equally informed of the Orbits, but there had been no violent exchanges between them all these years, and a battle of this scale with more than a dozen mechs was unprecedented. Almost everything the MPA pilots knew about mechs from the Orbits came only from their intel.

If one were to compare the three forces, the MPA had a closer relationship with the Five Galaxies, and was more in touch with normal society. Black Cove and the Orbits were very different; they were practically two independent communities. MPA's elite pilots also interacted more with regular people, compared to the other two forces. From those regular people, they derived a greater sense of superiority, and all those years of smooth victories left most of the elite pilots arrogant!

The exposure of their warship last time, with their main force mechs utterly defeated, was an unprecedented humiliation!

Moreover, the 4 mechs that perpetrated that humiliating incident was not even part of the Three Forces! How could this not

infuriate them? If not for the location in the Orbits, where infiltration was harder, and MPA's reservation against the mentalist sanctuary, they would not have sent a mere 25 mechs! However, given the swift response to their intel, where the MPA had prepared such a formidable force, one could see that they knew much about the Orbits! However, if Ye Chong knew that the MPA had deployed the largest possible offense they could gather on the Orbits against him, might he be flattered?

Feng Su charged fearlessly towards the 25 enemy mechs! Her goal was to stall the 3 main force mechs of the enemy - Mermaid's Curse! Mermaid's Curse was one of the MPA's 3 main force mechs. Their defining features were their sharp offensive weapons, accurate targeting and powerful automotives. If Ye Chong were here, he would have noticed that this mech model was identical to the one that tried relentlessly to kill to him some time ago.

The mechs were in an elegant white, with protective fins that curled slightly upwards, giving an air of aristocracy. Besides the usual accessories like lasers and heat ray guns, they also came with the enormously destructive nanowave guns; and unlike the Messengers, the nanowave gun was their main weapon. Their propulsion system was also a notch above the Messengers. The lock-on mechanism was manual, which depended heavily on the pilot's capabilities. This was why pilots of main force mechs were very few in numbers compared to pilots of the Messengers!

These 3 Mermaid's Curse mechs were Feng Su's main targets. With the Dawns against the Messengers, and an advantage in numbers, the Messengers will not stand a chance! The only mechs that could be a threat to them were these 3 Mermaid's Curses!

Mechs from the Orbits' sanctuary had peculiar battle strategies. They always battle in groups! One on one, a Messenger was more powerful than a Dawn. However, in the case of 5 against 5, both stood an equal chance of winning; in the case of 10 against 10, Dawns would hold the advantage. Hence, Dawn mechs always

operated in groups of 10! This unique battle strategy was enough to confound the MPA and Black Cove!

The 10 Dawns behind Feng Su flew in a swish towards the only standing building in the area! They had formed a circular formation; they believed that, even with 10 Messengers within their circle, breaking through would not be easy!

MPA's mechs had their hands full defending themselves - the enemy was not looking to destroy them all, but merely keeping them occupied, unable to attend to their mission! The purple Wings of Nirvana shone the brightest on the battlefield! The legendary trump card was true to her reputation - she was single handedly keeping 5 mechs occupied, including 3 of the Mermaid's Curse mechs, and she seemed to accomplish this with ease!

In this massive operation, success seemed close at hand, and the pilots tightening the circular formation could not help but felt slightly excited.

All of a sudden, a golden figure flashed by!

Chapter 127: Fish and Net II

One Dawn mech the nearest to the ruins of the building was shot by this golden light! There was no forewarning. The beam was fast. It was faster than these pilots could have expected. Their trusty intuition and prediction of movements gained from their training became nothing when facing the velocity of the beam.

They wanted to fight back, they raised the crosshair and shifted it around frantically. However the golden beam had already disappeared into the half-demolished building after giving a nice gentle touch to their ally before they could react.

The remaining pilots on the 9 mechs spent the next few moments taking a careful look on their fallen ally. To found the rapport between themselves, they had started their training together way back. They were highly synchronized, they felt for each other, they were intimate like brothers. And one of their beloved brothers had fallen by then. The pilots certainly were troubled.

If they were in a battlefield, they would never have been this reckless. But hell, this was not a battlefield to begin with! They were informed that there was only 1 person opposing them. Yes, only 1 person, a single man against the 10 Dawn mechs - if that would not spell "immediate successful capture", what else would be? The sudden change in the situation was a little unsettling for them. They had yet to become panicked however. They were rather more confused as they failed to identify what that golden light was.

What was that?

???

Confusion filled their mind.

And there was no response from their ally since then!

Zzzt! Zzzt!

They took a look at the mech, which looked really like a cheap fragile mode. It looked as if it could not survive a stronger impact, a cut was clearly discerned at the point of collision. No, there were multiple cuts! How could that happen? It was just like a touch-and-go! Those clean cuts revealed a pale greenish glow. The glow was familiar to the pilots. Hey wasn't that the glow from the energy inside the engine during operation? Why did the glow appear there?

The pale greenish glow was calm at first and then, as if reacting to the air it was exposed to, it began acting up as it quivered violently in toppled stability! It appeared like a man's heart pumping vigorously! Pump! Thup! Pump! ... Boom! They were blinded by the glaring light.

That mech blew up, right in front of everybody! The explosion of high density of energy was overwhelming in such a small area! The pilots did not manage to activate their protective shields. The mechs were blown away by the energy leakage! Their covers were scrapped.

At once, the half-demolished building was completely wrecked as it collapsed with a blast!

The building crashed down with its bricks and aged cements wielding a dusty storm!

In limited sight they saw through the flying dirt, a number of fine dark spots landed right on the shaking mechs after the impulse stealthily.

Ye Chong stood within the ruins, holding his breath in his miniature mech by Yu Di. The body size of Yu Di sufficiently provided a small space to fit Ye Chong within its shadow.

Yup. That beam of golden light was Ye Chong's assassination!

Ye Chong did not expect such speed from a miniature mech like Guardian when it was fully activated! Similarly, Gu Shaoze

probably did not foresee the miniature mech he created to be this powerful. Initially the Guardian was meant for Number 2. All the designs revolved about every aspect of hers to assist her in achieving a Mach 4.0 in her speed. They aimed for a Mach 4.0, that was it... till Ye Chong came and put it on... and he started blasting off into the field... he actually hit a Mach 10.0. Shocking! This was nothing Gu Shaoze would have imagined!

Ye Chong only wanted to try it out in his daily charity chores of saving the world before bedtime. He withdrew the daggers installed on the mech and gave a few slashes so they would learn their lesson. But then, the few slashes turned out to do way more than he intended! That capacity! These daggers were just like Ye Chong - a beast!

Right at that split second when Ye Chong's dagger touched the mech, the interface fluttered in his sight and a notification flashed within the numbers in black and white, "Dagger for No.2: Activated. Initiation: Completed!" The tiny words literally flashed so fast, they vanished that Ye Chong almost missed it if his eyes were not sharp enough.

Dagger for No.2! Number 2? Ye Chong could not help but to snicker a little, though he was in a battlefield and it would be a bad timing for chuckles. Well, Gu Shaoze could have changed the names when he knew Number 2 was not going to use it anytime soon. However, the name on the screen simply showed that he did not even bother to try.

The processor was otherworldly on the other hand. The monochromatic three-dimensional visual was illustrated right before Ye Chong's eyes. It was as if the processor was rattling with information as the illustration enlarged, twisted, panned over an angle, then to another in terrifying speed. Countless spots of the perceived surrounding were analyzed and visualized simultaneously. The strings of data came showering like a waterfall. Ye Chong gave up counting as his eyes kept missing the

fast-forwarding information strands. Before Ye Chong actually hit the mech, he could only discern the 8 overlapping lines with 7 dots over the mech's body.

There was no time for Ye Chong to figure out on what basis the lines and dots were drawn on the mech. Intuitively he just followed the 8 lines that appeared as he slashed the mech. The speed of his hand-movement was further enhanced by the Guardian, allowing him to complete such a set-up in one fine touch with his daggers.

He was not in the leisure to fulfill every procedure in a standard experiment from problem statement to hypothesis to inference and observation. The conclusion simply put was Ye Chong did not expect that much from a touch of a pair of pocket knives. The daggers might have been too mighty to be called pocket knives, but that was the truth. Using daggers usually equipped in a one-on-one on a mech was just like firing a heat-ray gun to a spaceship. Imagine what a mosquito's bite felt like on a whale. Ye Chong retreated in the speed of lightning! The guard of these 10 men were dense and impeccable. Hopefully Mu inside Yu Di could make a miracle somewhere, or he would be serving the men from the day onwards...

Ye Chong laughed bitterly in his mind. The Guardian was powerful... only on the armor itself. The weapon on the other hand was a joke... If he possessed a weapon fearsome enough to threaten the 10 men to back off and minimize the siege area, he might have a bit of opportunity.

"Ye." That voice! "Get over here quick!" Mu's voice came sounding in his ears.

Did something happen? Ye Chong's heart twitched but then he became relieved after. Is there any kind of situation that could be worse than this? After being sieged by 10 killing machines out there, everything else seemed like a pinch of salt, though Ye Chong jumped to Mu's side right away. "Mu?" He landed and was going to

ask Mu what happened, "So-" Boom! An impulse came gushing into his body. Ye Chong nearly tripped on his feet. He pulled his body back into the stance laboriously as he saw the grid-shaped boulders raining down the place. New data to the vicinity? Yes. The processor started rattling again as it began analyzing every single boulder passing by the camera. The information flushed Ye Chong's eyes. It was overwhelmingly fast that Ye Chong felt dizzy seeing them.

Ye Chong was pleading inside the miniature mech. The analysis was initiated automatically and it could not be turned off apparently. It would look fine in a simulation room; an empty simulation room. If one were to wear this in a place with lots of information like this for instance, where the visual zone was filled with numerous objects, one would be drowned by these analyzed data! Ye Chong had not gotten used to the speed of these incoming streams of data so he had to shift his attention to the three-dimensional illustration instead! Technically, what Ye Chong did was absolutely right. During the production stage of this mech, striving to speed up the processing speed of the in-built, Gu Shaoze actually changed the widely-used hologram projection in the visuals to the antique simplistic monochrome, which hence produced an amazingly efficient three-dimensional images. The flooding data were actually going to have some sort of bug-fix in the upcoming maintenance but he was struck down by MPA before he could perform the new coding. Eventually, the maintenance did not happen!

The Guardian in use was unquestionably an unfinished product in actuality. Well, practically, the "to-be-finished" part of the product was merely the additional filtering on the data stream to provide a sleeker interface. The other aspects of the mech were good enough of his expectation.

Under the protection of Yu Di, Ye Chong was safely shielded away from the collapse, though he did not seem to be aware of the

fact that he was the ultimate culprit behind this demolition! Ye Chong, confused as he watched Mu piloting Yu Di to pick up the bottle of cartridge and launch every single projectile inside!

At the very moment when Mu lifted the cartridge, Ye Chong already knew what to do next. It was the time to battle! The rapport between Ye Chong and Mu was justified.

As mentioned, right when the final projectile was launched from the cartridge, both Yu Di and Ye Chong commenced their movements! The sense of timing for Mu was literally flawless, not a single second was gone to waste.

As if synchronized, Yu Di and Ye Chong began concurrently!

The difference between each other grew prominent as they moved. In short-term dashing, Guardian was at upper hand. Ye Chong was leading Yu Di by few meters ahead right when they left the ruins. Then Ye Chong saw the shattered siege by the foes and the cluster of dusts in the air.

The monochromatic scope of Guardian was unaffected by the dust. Ye Chong found the 9 mechs very soon. Wait! Wow? Where's the other one? Did I break it? Ye Chong never imagined his little attack could annihilate a mech!

The landing point of the missiles Mu launched was of great accuracy - none of them missed! The dusty atmosphere provided the best camouflage to the missiles.

These projectiles sneaked their debut. The 9 pilots were alarmed by the sudden strike! A number of them was struck right on the head. Fred the Great was a genius! His crafts were reliable after all! Ye Chong adored the missiles.

"Over here!" hurried Mu.

Ye Chong had rushed to the front of a mech and was brandishing his dagger. Like a braking car, he ceased his attack and retracted his weapon. A tip to the toe on the opponent's mech, he flung

himself all the way to Mu hastily! The tip of his toe was enhanced by his strength through Guardian. It was so strong that the Dawn mech could not handle the inertia as it backed a few steps away.

He looked at where Mu was and went astonished. Wow Mu was still Mu! Even if he was in a mech like Yu Di, every ounce of potential inside the mech had probably been excavated thoroughly! It utterly felt like two different mechs compared to Ye Chong's own piloting when he was on Yu Di. Whether in regards of the speed or other aspects, Yu Di was lively!

Since Yu Di had lost an arm, it could only wield a magnetic blade. A leap by Yu Di and it came to the middle of two Dawn mechs. Before he launched the missiles, Mu had calculated the breaking point being between these two Dawn mechs. Thus, unfortunately these mechs received most of his bombardment.

!

Ye Chong was astounded.

A simple Thomas' Spin! It was perfect! The magnetic blade hid behind the buzzing plasma shield of Yu Di as swung robustly, giving occasional stabs right at the critical point!

Within a blink of an eye, the Dawn mechs did not expect to be this weak in front of an expert killer like Mu! A solo fight was never the arsenal of Dawn mechs. They would require assistance from their allies. Thus, being weakened and unable to provide help to each other while facing the mighty Mu, these mechs eventually became a pile of metal on the ground without much resistance.

Ye Chong had arrived, after the epic blade wielding!

The siege had lost its effect! There stood nobody before Ye Chong and Mu.

It's now or never!

The chance to escape the net was right before them!

Chapter 128: Fish and Net III

Out of the blue, a stream of purple outline slitted through the sky. Cutting through the air, overcoming the inertia, the object showed up right before Ye Chong and Mu, like a purple line drawn all the way from the sky to the ground.

The metallic gloss on the purple armor must be due to an inclusion of a kind of unique metal in the alloy during production. The body of mech was slender, exerting grace and sophistication, which appeared to be fragile at first glance. There was a pair of wings folded right at the back. It looked odd but it seemed to be of great craftsmanship. It was the first time Ye Chong spotted such finely made wings. The texture, the detail, the glow of it, every side of it felt like the actual wings of a bird. Wouldn't such overdone wings be hardly a tool in flight? Wouldn't it be a mere vase for predicament rather than adornment? Could such wings even withstand the coefficient of drag in flights of high velocity? Ye Chong was occupied with doubts as his belief always laid on the simplicity and conciseness of practicality. This mech before him had a rather conspicuous design. It looked like a bird but Ye Chong could not name what kind of a bird. Well, if Fred the Great was here, he must be waddling towards this beauty, giving careful caress as calling it the model made after the avifauna from the legend, the Phoenix itself.

Nevertheless, our Ye Chong was not the cosmopolitan man like Fred the Great. His scope had yet to be expanded despite all the adventures he had been through. All his eyes discerned was the three-dimensional illustration which kept rotating in the interface!

Ye Chong might not be able to judge the situation by the species of the mech but he was still the man of combats. He wielded his own strength as he was able to conclude this very particular purple mech having superiority in terms of mobility from that single landing made. He even speculated that it should be also nearly as

competent as Mu in terms of speed.

As much as he speculated, "Ye, be careful. This mech is good," notified Mu. "Good" was the killing term for Mu's comment. This mech must not be any fraud from the street market!

This mech was known as Feng Su's "Wings of Nirvana". The leader predicted, there were 25 mechs opposing them. And 20 of them had been held up by the 20 Dawn mechs sent. The situation was under control, both parties were well-behaved. The usual explosion and hell firings were not unleashed. The remaining 5 mechs, including the leading mech, the Mermaid's Curse were occupied by my own men as well. Well, there were 10 Dawn mechs left on my side. It would be more than enough to take that man! Wouldn't it?

But I never knew the one being caught up in my siege could be this strong!

Though Feng Su was against 5 mechs at once, the fight was done effortlessly. It was a piece of cake and not much of her concern. Her major concern sat on those mechs she sent to capture the target, especially after "that" happened unexpectedly.

The golden light came and left within twinkling of eyes. People could hardly see it, except for Feng Su.

Was that a miniature mech? Feng Su, also being the expert of the mechs, identified what that moving thing was. The amazing capability demonstrated by the Guardian was shocking to her mind. Nobody else could understand better what could this possibly mean than herself.

A miniature mech was nothing new in the industry. However, the issue always lies in the balance of minimizing the size while maximizing the strength, which was indirectly proportional to each other from the beginning.

The contradictory relationship between the miniaturization of

mechs and building of strength did not seem to exist on this mech. If she were to get this technique in hand, she believed that a technological breakthrough could be made with the techniques in her upper authority! No, it would be a leap in humanity, right away! The current style of battling could be changed and unquestionably, the Orbits would raise and become the leader of the 3 major forces in the galaxies!

The 3 major forces in mech development had set off for many years as they parted ways at one point. Nonetheless, all of them hit the neck-bottle of times in their development. Only such a revolutionary technique that toppled the law of size-strength relationship could bring this mech world to a new stage! And this stage, certainly would be a great leap in the years! Whoever made the leap first would be at absolute advantage!

Despite of that, if either one of the other two forces had obtained such technique ahead, the outcome was starkly blatant.

The moment when Feng Su saw how Ye Chong used that ordinary looking dagger to slice through the armor of the Dawn mech, she was literally stupefied!

This... this was against the law of nature! No it was against the law of physics! Everything that I know of!

Even a laser sword could not slice the armor of Dawn mech open this easily, what trickery was this? What were those daggers?

Imagine if the Black Covers ever acquired this skill... with the horrifying close-combat techniques they aced at... Feng Su trembled helplessly.

Any mistake in the information given would cause fatality in this moment. And there was. No one had ever thought that there was one more mech in the field!

The reaction speed and the calculation skills were too terrorizing! It was a moment of silence then a chain of back-to-back sequence

of actions came accurately. The foe seemed to have made great use of the situation and had shattered the flawless defense she presumed into a million pieces. And that happened in a few seconds. The big mech leading the smaller mech rushed out of the siege! Feng Su no longer had the leisure to play with the 5 mechs haunting her as she jumped out and tried to hold the pair back!

The Wings of Nirvana was surely the top mech from the Orbits, as it moved against the law of space it seemed. Traveling at immense momentum, it jumped across the sky, hopped right in front of Ye Chong and Mu to stop them!

While Ye Chong had his eyes glued on this purple mech, Feng Su also had her full attention on this strange golden man.

Ye Chong did not seem to be aware of who was piloting this purple mech however, despite the suffering he had been through because of this terrifying mentalist in purple cloak. Ironically, Feng Su had yet to notice this target she was going to capture was actually the fighter she misunderstood being one part of the Black Coves.

Both of them had another fateful encounter under this peculiar setting where they did not recognize each other.

The 5 mechs from MPA who lost the target seemed to be informed about Feng Su's strength as they did not inch towards her.

"Ready? Aim! Full power!" The leader of the group bit his teeth as he ordered in the Mermaid's Curse. He seemed determined as the order roared rashly.

The target he mentioned was actually Ye Chong and Yu Di with Mu inside!

"Um..." the few men hesitated. Aren't we supposed to bring them alive? The order said so... Why the attack?"

Full power literally meant firing with all weapons available,

which was hardly used in actual war field. It was much potent yet also crippled. After the firing was done, the mobility would be disabled for the next 15 seconds and it could simply mean death in the war field!

"I'm not letting the foe go and get that strange mech! I rather lose it! I rather have nobody getting that in the end than giving it away!" The words rang coldly, with the tone highlighted by determination and ferocity, which frightened the men a little.

If they were to return right now, being all defeated, a complete failure to the mission, they would be ultimately punished. The leader was right on his words, they would rather die in the field than being punished for giving the target away to the enemy.

The 4 men obeyed the leader's order together almost immediately after. The 5 mechs stood still in the air as they set their gaze off the 3 mechs on the ground. All the cartridges, the guns on the body were launched in a blast. The main weapon was also fearsomely pointed right at Yu Di and Ye Chong.

"Fire!!" The leader screamed on top of his lungs. A never-before-seen desperation filled his piercing voice.

Almost simultaneously, Feng Su standing right in front of Ye Chong and Yu Di felt a sense of eeriness somehow. Mentalist at development of mentality bestowed her the bizarre sixth sense, which caused her to react at the first moment!

A tip to the ground, she jumped up high and blocked the sight between the 5 mechs and Ye Chong.

Her purple wings were spread open. It was then when they realized how gigantic the Wings of Nirvana were! It was literally 15 meter long, which made the main body appear much smaller than before. A wave of purple glimmer hovered from the wings through the air and coagulated at 30 centimeters away from the wings. A plasma bubble of pale purple transformed into a giant plasma shield and covered the Wings of Nirvana entirely. Under Feng Su's

wings, Ye Chong was also within the proximity of protection.

Well, of course, such scenery came out in black and white at Ye Chong's interface.

The dazzling white flare blinded the place! Everyone could not help but to stop. The firepower from the 5 mechs converged into a broad beam of light. Nano waves, laser waves, heat ray waves, all sorts of beams came together at the same exact timing and frequency onto the same target!

The extreme amount of energy inside that beam set the alarm off wailing inside the hologram scanning system in all mechs. At one moment, every pilot in their mechs had their face drained, except for Ye Chong and Feng Su.

The light beam struck right onto the plasma shield of the Wings of Nirvana.

People on the ground were blinded by another even more dazzling shroud of light. They could see nothing else than complete whiteness, except for Ye Chong in his miniature mech.

The unique monochromatic view inside the Guardian had produced a memorable scene to Ye Chong.

Thup!

A faint sound of a crash, felt like the egg shell was smashed. The white light beam collided into the plasma shield which appeared to be glowing white in Ye Chong's visual. The light overflowed the space. The beam became splinters of fireworks and splashed all over the place. They then disintegrated in air quickly.

The collision of energy particles, with the point of collision being the center, caused a major impulse spreading throughout the place!

Yu Di was not as fortunate as Ye Chong. Mu did react in time to have his shield right before the chest. But Yu Di had been damaged before, which weakened the shield, making it like a slab of ice. It did not last for even a split second as it turned to ashes by the light

beams.

Mu's irreproachable control was manifested at this moment. Of course, if anyone could witness such miracle by then! Within that brief and easily-overlooked second, Mu had warped into the proximity of the plasma shield produced by the Wings of Nirvana. Even so, Yu Di suffered a severe loss, where 2 of its arms were gone. Only one was retained and it was the one with the cartridge. The other 2 vaporized because of that beam. The cartridge was empty. No ammo remained, which meant Yu Di was officially deemed as useless in battle.

The collision of energy had produced tremendous strength, which even the Wings of Nirvana with immense capabilities backed off uncontrollably.

Other than Mu, Ye Chong who still possessed a clear view of the happening saw the Wings of Nirvana approaching him helplessly. His eyes glowed cold.

Exerted strength to the tip of his toes, the Guardian's bursting capability had accelerated Ye Chong to a whole new level. The daggers were ready in his hands!

The three-dimensional illustration rotated endlessly in the interface. The information came crashing like waterfall. The white dots and crossing lines became lesser and brighter at the same time! It became clearer!

Locked on!

Ye Chong's pupils shrunk drastically!

Chapter 129: Not the End, but the Beginning?

Ye Chong had a plan in his mind. Without hesitation he climbed upwards and made a quick slash on the purple mech with his daggers.

The mech might have acted heroically and saved his day, but Ye Chong was not foolish enough to have faith on a stranger, believing that the act was for his own good. If he did not give hindrance of some sort, especially to the foe before him, with its capabilities Mu would have probably gave a depressing figure on the possibility of their escape again. Such a golden opportunity for a golden man, how could he let it slip?

Like a tinted bullet, Ye Chong launched himself all the way to this mech in rage!

Feng Su was startled as she piloted the Wings of Nirvana all the way to the side. A sharp turn on her steer. The extensive wings folded softly like an actual pair of wings of a bird as it covered up the critical spot of the mech. The whole sequence of inputs was executed right at a whim.

Trust your intuition! It was the unmovable belief in every mentalist, the source of their forces. It had also become a habit, the basis of Feng Su's life.

Feng Su's action was rapid! But Ye Chong in his Guardian was faster!

A brandish from his twin daggers flashing the unique, cold gaze of cruelty, the blade-wielding was indiscernible by naked eyes, the blades seemed to have turned invisible in Ye Chong's hands. The air was waving in ripples as Ye Chong cut through the air. It was fast, too fast!

But he felt nothing during the slash!

That was surprising to Ye Chong as he believed that his sudden attack could have been effective, till the opponent dodged most of his strikes, as if the opponent saw it on a script and was ready the whole time.

Due to the higher standing in sensory development, mentalists often possessed great premonition, which would be strengthened when more training were accomplished! No doubt that such characteristic was extremely useful in combats. It allowed one to foresee the movements, the happening a moment later which gave you the leading position in fights, hence dramatically improved the likelihood of your victory!

Well, with that said, the process of a battle was never as straightforward as it was always illustrated in the novel. Even if you were aware of the intended upcoming behavior of the foes, it did not necessarily mean that you have the control of the entire scene. While mentality played a role in contributing to the likelihood of your victory, the standard of piloting a mech, your own strength etc. had far greater contribution. Conclusively, what determines the outcome of a battle is always plural and one should not presume it as a factor of singularity.

As mentioned before, there were 3 major forces in the galaxies - the Black Covers were great with their arms and legs; the Orbits were great with their senses... well, if that was the case, MPA should have the weakest pilots of them all. The catch was, however, the pilots of MPA had better mechs. Eventually, every faction of them shared a kind of perk. They were closely related and certainly they were equal.

Feng Su was the ace among the pilots of the Orbits. She had a well-developed mentality as well as impeccable piloting skills. She might not be recognized as the strongest pilot in the Orbits, but surely she was the pilot with the strongest extrasensory intuition and the fastest in reaction to it.

Hence, even under the hacking speed of Ye Chong, she dodged

most of them solely because of her overwhelming intuition!

What?

No... It can't be. Ye Chong was dumbstruck. With his speed, it should not be strange that even Mu would fail to avoid the attacks...

However the reality was in fact... the foe dodged it!

Quite a number of the slashes he made were missed. The few slashes struck were also way off the tangent sketched by the Guardian in the interface.

Luck? Coincidence? Or the foe had something in the back? Ye Chong was skeptical.

"Ye! Go! Now!" Mu's tone sounded intensely hurried. If Mu said so... Ye Chong could not afford to disobey the instruction as he laid the tip of his toes at the foe and launched himself away to Yu Di like a golden arrow. The rapport between the best combination was shown again, as Mu sped up Yu Di, rushing his way to Ye Chong, opened his one remaining arm. Thup! Ye Chong clang on the single arm like an ape.

Undoubtedly, because of the enhanced strength by the Guardian, the Wings of Nirvana was forced away the moment Ye Chong made the leap.

Under Mu's flawless calculation, he sped up Yu Di in the shortest time possible and grabbed Ye Chong and they disappeared!

The glaring light faded away at last. People on the ground looked at each other in bewilderment.

"What ... happened...?"

"I don't know..."

"Are we abducted?" "Hey! What are these?"

"The Messengers? Why are they...Ah!!"

...

!

The people realized they were surrounded by enemies. The scene turned chaotic after. The mechs from both sides, the MPA and the Orbits went after each other. Nonetheless, the Orbits outnumbered the MPA and they were better supports in a team fight. They covered each other up and lastly they surrounded the Messengers instead.

The Dawn mechs' eyes lustered upon their prey as the Messengers backed off carefully. Although the pilots from MPA did not fear death as their destiny, they were horrified by the intensity. They held their guards high, their weapons were charged, anticipating the final moment.

The pilots from the Orbits awaited the ultimate order from their leader. As soon as Feng Su uttered the keyword, these filthy intruders from MPA would have their remnants here. They held no fond towards intruders, only pure hostility, especially when they actually lost a brother in this intrusion! The golden man might have been the culprit, but obviously he had got something to do with these intruders!

And that was how the pilots from MPA became the scapegoat of the day!

Both parties were unexpectedly calm, as one identified one's own inferiority in the situation while the other awaited the order from Feng Su!

In sheer silence, they glared at each other. Eerie it was to see about 50 mechs hovering in the sky, one flock towards the other, yet not a sound was heard. It was too quiet that it felt like a static scene from horror movies.

Feng Su's heart rumbled with shock. The flocks by her side were not her concern at all, but the golden man was. The fact that he

was not affected by the blazing light was more than surprising to Feng Su. The alarm had been raised to Level : Yellow. Feng Su was enraged upon seeing Wings of Nirvana in scratches. Her trusty steed was never hurt! She took it as a sign of pride being an ace in the team, for no one including the mech itself would be hurt under her leadership! Nevertheless, it was history.

Scratches of a depth of roughly 30 centimeters was nothing to a mech of 10 few meters tall. But the shocker was that these scratches happened to be at the weaker area of the armor! Feng Su was horrified as she imagined what could happen if she failed to dodge in time, with the slashes on the few weaker spots on her armor. She would... She would not have survived...

Shuddered, Feng Su held back her thought. In a brief second, the man actually found the weak spots on my mech? How horrible!

Was it because of the sharp eyes of that man? Or was it because of that amazing gadget on the mech?

The cuts were smooth? How come? My Wings of Nirvana is the highest ranked mech in the Orbits! The armor of the main body is sturdier than ever! It should have been at least a strong mech even at the origin of this stranger! Feng Su had confidence to declare her mech being at least solid enough to take attacks even from the Black Covers, those known for their top close-combat skills.

That miniature mech could not stop giving me surprise, couldn't it? No wonder the MPA went so far for this! If I were to report this to the authority, I assume that they would take some sort of action!

And the information was absolutely wrong! There were two people here? The pilot in the other mech was someone not to be ignorant of. Such an expert! That accuracy, that flawlessness in his piloting, there was no ineffectiveness! With the calculation and foresight of his, he should be far more potent than the pilot in the gold miniature mech! The design of the mech was one-of-a-kind and the cartridge was well-placed! I wonder which genius put up

such design?

These anomalies! Feng Su was amazed. Her will to conquer burnt up high. If I ever met them again...

Feng Su could not help but felt excitement rolling in her heart.

Out of ponder, she took a look around and soon she got hold of the situation.

The mission was not completed, but it did not mean that Feng Su was out of luck! Firstly, the infiltration of MPA pilots in the Orbits had been exposed. Secondly, in spite of the fact that the target had escaped, as long as they were in the vicinity of the Orbits, Feng Su's men would stand far better chance than the other forces, simply because they could call all men to retrieve the target, which was something incomparable to the intruding foes who shared a much more pitiful amount. Well, it had caused enough fiasco to alarm the Black Covers at the very least.

Still...

Feng Su knew it well that it was not easy for someone to exit the Orbits.

Most importantly, the value of this miniature mech had been blatantly justified, along with precious first-hand information about it!

Regarding these men from MPA... Feng Su was a little puzzled. It would be bad to just let them go... But if she were to kill them... they were not going to sit still and let the beams hit them, then she would lose more men in the end and it only signified an obvious taunt to MPA, leading a galactic war some time in the future... That would be bad too...

A bloodshed should not be what the authority desired...

While being puzzled by the dilemma, a flock of mechs flew to the place. They were all Dawn mechs, densely connected. There should be at least 100 of them by a glance as they traveled in a

perfect formation speedily towards her.

The 25 mechs from MPA started acting in panic!

The new batch of Dawn mechs splat into 10 smaller teams as they went into their position like 10 winding snakes, further enforcing the siege!

The 29 Dawn mechs by Feng Su were excited by the participation of their allies! This was because it certainly showed a difference in strength with these additional men! And it only would take a word from Feng Su to officially sear these intruders into ashes! Stimulated, the radical fighters had their blood boiling, trembling.

Beep.

Feng Su received an order from the authority.

She headed into the sieged area, with 20 Dawn mechs surrounding her, covering the Wings of Nirvana straight away!

Her soft voice echoed throughout the field via the loudspeaker.

"To the intruders, I believe you should have received a word from our supreme authority on allowing all of you to surrender. To refrain from unnecessary conflict, for the sake of our Orbits, please deactivate your weaponry, get grounded immediately and deploy all your mechs and gadgets. The mechs would be under our safekeeping for security purposes. Rest assured that they would be returned once you are exiled from the Orbits. I request your constant cooperation!" and she retreated to the outside.

The pilots from the MPA were biting their lips. Their expression was grim as they passed their mechs, the meaning of their life, the enlightenment of their soul, the exit of their passion to an insignificant other. Some pilots of a younger age could not control but to shed a tear. The warriors who have never feared the demise to their role, had submitted their identity as an inevitable fate. The pain, the agony... a fate worse than death, the men from the Orbits could not have their eyes on such demolition.

Feng Su watched on in silence. She was aware... that the authority must have made some kind of agreement with the MPA. Something was planned... or how would these pilots lower their pride as they hand over their precious that easily?

Sigh, probably this was not the end. This was just the beginning.

Thought Feng Su as her mind wandered off to somewhere else in the future.

Chapter 130: Loss and Gain

Sob.

Ye Chong gave a stare of a husband looking at a dying wife at Yu Di. It was harshly devastated by the air raid, like Harmony back then. And this one could be better off at the dump. How fateful he met Yu Di, such fitting mech to his personality with such striking gadgets in-built and he lost it. The cool appearance, the cartridge, the four arms, everything had become the lump of iron on the ground. It was heartbreaking to Ye Chong as not only Yu Di was a rare all-rounder, the four arms on it allowed his overwhelming hand movement speed to exert the maximum output. After pairing with various models of mechs, Yu Di was undeniably the perfect consort!

And... the former glory was gone! He took a good look at it, his hands caressing it in sympathy. Nothing like Yu Di before was remained. It was fully charred. The body was cracked from the impulse caused by the energy collision. The arms... It was a pain in Ye Chong's heart to even mention it. Only the arm with the cartridge was intact, the rest had probably raised upon the heaven, with a tiny bit of them stuck at the body. The state was hopeless, as the missiles were specially tailored by Fred the Great, those were unique and non-renewable, except if they encountered Fred the Great again... Wonder how many light years it would take if they were going to meet again.

Other than the engine, none of the other parts were functional...

Hei Zi felt the cracks and scratches on Yu Di with his hands, "Gosh! Did they cause these? But I must say you are fortunate to make it out alive!" exclaimed Hei Zi. Though the fact that he abandoned Ye Chong was haunting them. It could be for Nan Nan's safety, still... Hei Zi couldn't forgive himself!

Nan Nan sat across Ye Chong's shoulders with her hands clipped

on Ye Chong's collar to prevent falling as she began her commentary, "Poor... poor big, big mech!" Yu Di was about 20 meters tall, which was twice the length of an ordinary mech, hence the "big, big" statement from Nan Nan.

"Sigh," Hei Zi took a moment to inspect the mech, his face looked depressed, his head shaking. "There's nothing we can do. What a waste to a good mech."

Ye Chong stood before Yu Di, his hands stuck on its body, hoping that a miracle could happen. Maybe he could still feel the heartbeat somewhere! Maybe he could ask Hei Zi's master to try fixing it! Yes! "Ye." Mu's voice came ringing in his head, "According to the outcome of my analysis, the probability of reversing the damage done to Yu Di is below 5%." An official declaration of death from the expert.

"Big brother..." Nan Nan's words came weakly.

Ye Chong was calm on the outside but he was wailing on the inside! Although he had Guardian, which by any chance would perform way better than Yu Di in his hand, its attacking range was much smaller than Yu Di. It was also a typical model for usage within the atmosphere, which raised another issue of whether the miniature mech could travel in space like Yu Di before. And then capability of combating in space... you've got to be joking! Chances were Gu Shaoze never thought about using this suit to fight in space! The mobility of the Guardian was granted by Ye Chong's own explosive capacity of muscles plus the magnification by the miniature engines. You could not find anything to exert forces on to produce movement! Ye Chong might have ended up in space and got stuck in the weightless state. There could be meteorites for him to step on but meteorites do not come every minute! Without the amazing burst of speed in short distance for survivability, the Guardian was merely a bullseye for the other pilots to aim on!

Frankly speaking, Yu Di was more balanced in all aspects. It was a brawling model but with the addition of the cartridge, the aspect

of being able to do ranged attack was fulfilled. And it would still be a good model for brawling in space!

Ye Chong was in the Orbits - most likely he would encounter battles in space and fortunately he got the Guardian - the finest weapon on the ground, which had zero capacity in space. Ye Chong tried to be optimistic but he could not! How could Ye Chong not be sorrow about this? Moreover, thanks to the grand debut by his Guardian, the entire infantry of the Orbits should be coveting the miniature amazement. He could imagine how thousands of Dawn mechs would eat him up the moment he appeared in a golden suit, glaring at the pedestrian like the LED of the street!

You had finally found the Excalibur somewhere in the world, but you must hide it or you'll die, you could not wield it in front of people, you could not even use it to chop trees because the people would come like a nest of bees hunting you down and for all the trouble you broke the chopping knife of your house - this probably summed up Ye Chong's gloomy salad days.

"Don't be sad, pal!" By looking at how grievous Ye Chong was, Hei Zi smiled with his teeth shining brighter on his tanned skin, "The new does not come without the old leaving." There was some mystery running on his face. It was weird to see a sincere man like him to put up such a mischievous face.

Ye Chong stared at Hei Zi skeptically. Hei Zi quickly lowered his head. Huh... Ye Chong could see somehow Hei Zi was trying to hold his laugh the whole time. What was so funny?

It was dinner and Ye Chong had it with Nan Nan and Hei Zi as usual. The mentioned grandfather had never appeared before the dining table. Sometimes Ye Chong wondered if the sincere brother and sister were having a fictional grandfather who was in pink of health in spite of an old age.

Hei Zi was happily having his meal though. Back then, Nan Nan was a monster to tame during dinner time. It took him wrestling

effort to get the girl sitting still to finish her food. Things had changed ever since Ye Chong arrived. Nan Nan was tamed by herself, where every dinner ran smoothly. The first time it was Hei Zi that could feel the family life was such wonder.

Ye Chong lay on the bed after dinner. Little Nan Nan was sleeping on her bed nearby. Soundly Nan Nan slept, anyone could have told the little girl had a great time in the day. Nan Nan did have her own room but... when Ye Chong decided to move in, she showed persistence of moving in along as she rampaged in the living room, demanding Hei Zi to take action. In the end, the kind Brother Hei Zi lifted her bed all the way to Ye Chong's room.

Ye Chong was researching about mentalist. The training was sadly not as effective as he expected. Probably as the databank had mentioned, his talent was terribly inadequate in this. He was not going to give up however. He might had an inadequate mana to do mentalist efficiently but he knew his ability was being enhanced, just that the rate was too measly he could not tell. He needed it anyway. Every bit of improvement meant something!

He started communicating with Mu after researching for quite some time.

"Hey Mu, say if we were still at home, what would have happened?" asked Ye Chong, feeling nostalgic of Trash Planet-12. The world outside was more than entertaining yet it was bewildering to Ye Chong sometimes. It felt like Ye Chong started off like a blinded rat in a maze, heading into nothing, having no plan about his next move, hitting into walls and breaking them from time to time. He had nothing in mind and only acted upon the situation coming to him, only acted based on the surroundings.

What should he do the day after? Ye Chong did not hold a kind of concept for this. It was solely a matter of survival - it was not about what to do the day after, it was about whether if he could live till the day after. The outside world was known to be dangerous and Ye Chong was taking extreme care of himself the whole time but

slowly he realized that, unlike the Trash Planet, the outside world did not seem to have a sense of alert all the time, since... most people were safe most of the time!

On the Trash Planet, Ye Chong's sole purpose was to stay alive. However after leaving the planet, the purpose was no longer a thing in his mind, which confused him a little. After interacting with ordinary citizens from the other planets - getting into knowing them, talking to them, understanding their jokes, getting involved in their lives, somehow the nature's law of survival he had strong faith on was cloaked by modernity and had transformed into something foreign there to him. Without the stress on survivability, with the new set of law so strange, his life felt relaxing yet unreal...

Sensed the paradigm shift in Ye Chong, Mu wanted to comment something sensible, but he was not Shang, his mood matrix was unable to compute the changes, "Based on the information obtained, possibly you are still fighting with mutated lifeforms and you should be 40% behind your training progress compared to you here." That was Mu's answer towards Ye Chong's odd inquiry as he tried imagining life lingering on Trash Planet-12.

"Mhm. But that sort of life was boring anyway! Mu, do you have an ambition?" asked Ye Chong.

"Ambition?" Mu tried processing the term perceived but the definition puzzled him. Well if it was Shang, he probably should have a motivational talk an hour long with Ye Chong by then!

"Umm... Ambition is something like what you would want to do the most in the future!" Ye Chong tried explaining with the limited knowledge in his head.

"If that is the case, my ambition would be staying by Ye's side," flatly his answer came.

It was a little touching to Ye Chong though!

"Hey."

?!

Out of sudden, Ye Chong was alarmed by the whisper, he heard the footsteps approaching him.

The door was knocked and was opened, oh it was Hei Zi. Ye Chong was relieved. "Ye, I-" Hei Zi shut his mouth abruptly upon seeing Nan Nan sleeping soundly in the bed. He then gestured Ye Chong to come out in excitement.

Ye Chong tiptoed to the outside of the room. Once he was out, Hei Zi came right to his face, whispering in leaking joy, "Come with me. My master wants to see you!"

Chapter 131: The Workshop Underground

Technically, Hei Zi's master happened to be Nan Nan's grandfather.

Ye Chong tailed Hei Zi to the backyard. It was a new spot of Nan Nan's home to Ye Chong as Hei Zi had never brought Ye Chong there before. The backyard was not totally secluded however, it was merely because Ye Chong had been too busy minding his own business to take a peek at someone else's backyard. The place was spacious but Ye Chong's animalistic intuition suggested him a kind of danger lurking in the place. He could smell it! In addition, Hei Zi was also acting quite cautiously as he led the road, "Stick to me. Closely!" he reminded from time to time as they moved. Ye Chong followed him closely, where he even mimicked the pace of Hei Zi's step. Ye Chong did not intend to try anything funny at that moment. Certainly there was some catapulting or killing machine hidden in such an ordinary backyard...

"Great!" Mu's voice rang, he sounded impressed, "This is a creative security." Unfortunately there was no processor to transmit the data he received from the surrounding. Ye Chong could not speculate what sort of "creative security" there was in the yard. Well, if Mu complimented it, probably it should be rather powerful by nature. Regarding creativity... Who cares?

Since Mu had kind of "warned" about it, Ye Chong walked on as he literally laid the exact step as Hei Zi's.

At the inner area of the yard there was a giant house made out of stones and bricks. It looked pretty normal from the outside. "Ye, let me remind you that the walls contain a fairly thick and highly dense alloy board." The next comment had justified Ye Chong the anomaly of this house, "It also contains a certain standard of anti-detection ability."

"Anti-detection ability?" Ye Chong wowed, "A certain standard

of?" He became confused... What in the Haleyson he meant by "a certain standard"? What kind of "standard"? Mu shouldn't be using a word this vague... Wasn't there usually a range of figures at least?

"Mhm, that is correct. A certain standard of anti-detection ability, which even though are ineffective against me, it is effective even on the most advanced detection systems in the market," explained Mu. "I see." Ye Chong was enlightened.

He realized how roomy the inside was too. A purplish brown board was hung at the wall right opposite them, with a calligraphy written, "[The Spirit Shines in the Bones of the Blade](#)". Ye Chong's attention was not on the meaning behind it, rather he wondered if the calligraphy was well-done, but he had zero expertise on calligraphy that he could not give his comment! There were numerous strange-looking apparatuses laid around the room while a variety of odd-looking things were scattered over the floor. A careful glance and Ye Chong recognized some of them! Those should be some skeletons of mutated lifeforms! He had seen countless of these back on Trash Planet-12! While the others... Ye Chong took a better glance... he could not tell. The texture was really peculiar though... with some of them having a metallic gloss.

"These are some substandard products... some people called it 'defective products'... Well, they are defective by nature but it's kind of a waste if we just throw them out of the window. So my master kept them here, considering how sometimes these could be useful recyclables!" Hei Zi looked much more relieved after getting into the house as he joyfully explained to Ye Chong.

Hei Zi's step was broadened as they had arrived at the center of the house after a brief moment of conversation. A few taps on the interface and a few turns on the knob, Hei Zi clicked the apparatus by his side. He led Ye Chong to a corner after that. There was somehow... a square hollow at the ground. A flight of stairs was extended to the underground. The taps and turns were probably triggers to the opening here! Such an exceptional design! Hiding

the switch inside here among the sea of junks and apparatuses, it sure would be a hassle for an intruder to even find the entrance.

Little glimmer shone through the first few steps by the hole. The staircases seemed endless... Ye Chong could not tell the end of the stairs, he could barely see the bottom! It should be a very, very deep underground... Why do these people like to get themselves this deep under the surface? Ye Chong did not get the logic behind this.

"Come," Hei Zi initiated his steps as he walked downstairs. Ye Chong could do nothing else than tailing him quickly. "Mhm?" The place was of total darkness the moment Ye Chong got down, as the moving flooring on the surface had been closed. Ye Chong was a little surprised the fact that he was not aware of the flooring closing up. If it was not the sudden change of lighting, he could not tell... as he could hardly hear a sound from the surface even with his hearing. This was a trivial detail yet it was convincing enough to tell Ye Chong that even the flooring was of great craftsmanship!

"Now..." Stated Hei Zi as they walked on, "This is the real workshop. My master works here usually. And I'm here most of the time too. But I'm still doing the hammering, I'm not working on the important part." His voice was already loud on the surface, it sounded like a roaring buzz underground.

"Oh," Ye Chong responded as he followed on. He still had the slightest idea on calling from Nan Nan's grandfather... The place was really concealed too, unlike the backyard... They should not be bringing guests for a simple greeting or whatever... Then what was this? Ye Chong did not worry about his own safety though. He was confident of his strength back then, besides, he had the Guardian, which indisputably was the lord of fighters!

And there was Mu too!

Yeah, that's the point!

The stairs were much longer than he expected. It went way, way,

down under the ground. Luckily they moved pretty quickly which the glimmering exit turned brighter and Ye Chong could hear the clinks of the machines. And Ye Chong sensed the ground shaking a little as they got to the bottom. No wonder they had it so deep into the ground! The shake would have alarmed anyone nearby!

What were they doing down here? Ye Chong was intrigued, very intrigued.

At the end of the stairs, a shocking scene awaited before him!

He did not predict such an airy space at the underground. This basement should have the size of a spaceship, he believed. The roof was of a metallic silver... which was unordinary as the frames appeared to be made out of metallic skeletons about an arm broad overlapping each other... The basement was not supported by any pillar! The skeletons were the only support to hold the room from collapsing! The lighting was great too. Ye Chong could see everything at one glance at least! By the stairs there were a rack of countless squares, which every of it contained a kind of parts of mech. It was the same part but of different models and qualities, so it looked dazzling to Ye Chong.

Overwhelming! These accessories were well-placed on the rack, like rows of armies. And judging by their appearance, Ye Chong could tell that all of these accessories were of top-quality! Such premium gears sitting together, it was like a parade, a carnival to Ye Chong. He was mesmerized, knowing that how many mechs one could make with these parts! It could fill the entire exhibition hall!

Between these racks there was an empty lane leading to elsewhere. Hei Zi gestured Ye Chong to move on this road.

On their way to the next destination, Ye Chong eyed the parts like a hungry wolf, covetous his sight wafted through the racks. "Great parts!" Mu reviewed with honesty, which further set Ye Chong on blaze!

"Really? Maybe I can show you some parts, only show, hahaha!"

...

Once Hei Zi stepped into a particular room, he went quiet completely, as his expression grew stern, even his steps came lighter.

After they left Ye Chong's most adored area, he withdrew his longing sight and then he inspected the other places. Tightly connected to the area of parts of fantasy, there was an area filled with a lot of never-before-seen apparatus. The clinks and the booms came from these machines apparently. But they seemed a little outdated... they did not have the "techy" look of modern technology... However Ye Chong must admit that these machines were well-maintained. Likewise to the parts, the machines were properly placed too. An elderly was operating one of the machines and he seemed focused. The product was appearing in the machine. There was only a silhouette, but judging by the outline of the product, Ye Chong speculated it being some sort of connecting buckle of the mech's inside.

Behind these machines there were tons of raw materials piling. Ye Chong could simply tell a few of them being the mutated lifeforms he recognized, like those he saw on the ground, but there were much more unidentifiable skeletons scattered on the floor.

With respect Hei Zi walked to the old man, he exchanged conversation with the old man in whispers, which Ye Chong could not hear a word. Nan Nan's grandfather briefly pointed his machine and pointed the around, nodded as he turned to Ye Chong and he turned back to his work again. Hei Zi looked at Ye Chong awkwardly with a laugh. Well Ye Chong shook his head. It was okay, his face said. The old man probably asked him to wait as he was in the middle of something.

He waited for literally 30 minutes and finally Nan Nan's grandfather had his work done, as he switched off the machine.

The room turned dead silent after the machine was shut. The hair was snow-white on his head, his face looked laborious, "How do you feel..." His word came reluctant, "After seeing all these?" He forced a smile as he waved his arms open.

"Not bad!" Ye Chong replied concisely.

"Hehehe..." Nan Nan's grandfather chuckled, "Good! Good! I was afraid that you aren't even bothered with these outdated toys! You saved my beloved Nan Nan yet I could not find a chance to repay you. I heard from Hei Zi that you have a passion for mechs. You should have done quite some researches I assume? What I have here are some good old parts. I must admit, I don't really know well about mechs... These parts happened to be the backup parts after the production on orders from the clients. Feel free to take any of these according to your needs. Well..." he chuckled again, "Piling here would only get all rusty. Nothing good would happen to them. Take them as a token of my appreciation. Don't be shy, just take them on your liking! If you have any inquiry, you could ask my apprentice, Hei Zi. He knows the mechs much better than me. Yawnn..." His mouth went opened, "I'm so tired. I'm heading to bed now. Enjoy your excavation here, good night!" He dragged his steps to the other side piling with the raw materials, where there were 2 rooms surprisingly, those should be Hei Zi and his.

Well! Who cares!

Ye Chong was insanely merry! Was there anything much happier than this? He was naturally good at mech-assembling and Nan Nan's grandfather was absolutely right! He, had passion! The parts might have looked all weird and foreign to him and there were a large number of them, but he had Mu! So no more worries!

After a moment of discussion with Ye Chong, Mu underwent a thorough scan over all parts in the area and had itemized them in various categories, grading and functions. "So how did you guys do mechs?" Ye Chong had a conversation with Hei Zi while waiting for the scan to be completed. Not only Mu did the scanning

process, he also modified and improvised to generate a few final designs for Ye Chong's reference.

Such a wonderful opportunity! Ye Chong was so obsessed with mechs at that moment. He could not wait! He was going mad as he could imagine himself swimming in the piles of treasure and embracing the liveliness of the gears! It was rare to have someone this generous, he had got to pick the best among them all!

"Well, generally you should start with the inside, it's like the heart..." While they exchanged conversation, Hei Zi felt strange that Ye Chong had yet to make his move, wondering what in the Haleyson he was standing there when he should be picking the parts. The expression was relaxed too. "Ye Chong, you should be picking the parts you know, there are tons of them, it could take years to find the right part!" reminded Hei Zi.

"Understood." Ye Chong nodded but his legs remained rooted, "I too agree the inside is important, sometimes..." He just carried on the conversation with Hei Zi!

"So what are you guys known as?"

Hei Zi's lips lifted, words came uttered.

It was only then Ye Chong was informed of their title.

They were the Skeleton Artisans!

The original word was "骨刀出魂"

Bone-Sword(or blade) - Out - Soul(or spirit)

Technically we tend to see similar terms at craftsman or blacksmith's place, which suggests whatever you made, make it with a kind of spirit (your passion) and the product would be the greatest, that it felt like the spirit was imbued.

Chapter 132: Skeleton mech

Animal skeletons were a kind of organic material, with many unique physical properties; skeletons of mutated lifeforms were even stronger. Some mutants even have bones that were harder than high-strength alloys, and very resilient. Most importantly, they were much lighter than metals - a very crucial property, since lightweight materials could greatly reduce the burden on the mech's engines, and would substantially improve the mech's automotive performance!

However, skeletons, unique as they were, did not come in a consistent form, and processing them was difficult; one can imagine how hard it would be to mold them into the various parts of a mech. Even if they could be shaped into appropriate parts, the ingrained surface of the bones often led to uneven force distribution among the parts, thus reducing their resilience and introducing a random factor to the quality of the parts.

The sky high costs and low probability of creating satisfactory products were the reasons for the lack of interest in skeletons as building or manufacturing materials.

Nan Nan's grandfather was a skeleton carver, and lived a poor life. One day, a client brought a set of giant wart frog's bones and a schematics, requesting to use the frog's bones to be processed based on the schematics. The client also promised a higher reward based on the sturdiness of the final product.

Nan Nan's grandfather had tried his hands on skeleton workmanship since young, his years of experience allowed him to be deeply familiar with the pattern of skeletal surfaces. He made short work of the final product based on the client's specifications. The product was determined to have excellent mechanical properties through examination using a professional device, and the client was much overjoyed. That was how Nan Nan's grandfather earned a sizable sum!

From then on, more people came to him for his services, and he did not stop studying intensively to improve his skills. He grew more competent, and began to have a reputation in selected circles! However, while he was always making parts for skeleton mech, his unfamiliarity with mechs meant that clients would have to bring their own schematics for him to create the final product as desired.

Those who knew him called him the Skeleton Artisan.

As his life became easier, and his reputation became more widespread, more organizations began to attempt to win him over to their side. They used all sorts of tricks, but he was unmoved by sweet words or threats, and none could convince him otherwise. Soon, he was targeted by an organization whose methods were far, far more ruthless and brutal than the gentler persuasions he had experienced before! Nan Nan's parents had perished in that incident, while Nan Nan was rescued and escaped with her grandfather, finally landing in the Orbits.

In this violent society, he quickly found a new home, and his skills won him great respect. No one would offend the Skeleton Artisan, and none of the local organizations dared to meddle with people who possessed such unique skills, since they were under the protection of the sanctuary. Even the mentalists from the sanctuary were very courteous to them.

Of course, this did not mean that all was safe and well, like the time when that group of people Ye Chong met had threatened Doctor Lu. When your life was in danger, you tend to be reckless. Besides, who here on the Orbits was not a desperate person?

That was why Nan Nan's grandfather had installed a top-of-the-line security system!

Skeleton carving was a branch of carving skills that received little attention, and there were probably no education institution that would list it as one of their offered courses. It was only a traditional craft passed on from one carver to another, slowly

losing its place in history!

Hei Zi was a student accepted by Nan Nan's grandfather after they came to the Orbits. He was hardworking, practical, and eager to learn, winning the old man's approval. The only regret was that Hei Zi was a little too old to begin learning the craft and limited in talent, thus he could only improve slowly over time.

Hei Zi saw that Ye Chong fully absorbed in his words, and could not help but feel excited as he continued on, "Look at this, this is the shell of a mantic locust. It looks like metal, but when I examined it, it does not have a scrap of metal in it. The thing's strong, and very resilient, suitable for making a mech's shield. Most importantly, it is light, try it!"

The shell spread across the size of 2 or 3 tabletops with a slight concave bend, and its surface shone with a metallic luster. The entire shell was in a greenish black, overlaid with wavy stripes of brilliant yellow, a dazzling piece. Ye Chong gave it few knocks, and heard the crisp echo from the material - it was solid hard. He reached for the edges of the shell and lightly lifted it, which came up with ease.

It was truly lightweight. If this shell could be made into a shield, it would definitely reduce the burden on the mech's engines significantly, besides minimizing the reaction time of the arm that wielded the shield. However, his only concern was that the shell was strong enough to be a shield, as Hei Zi claimed.

"This is the mech's mechanical arm. You see these 5 fingers? They're all made from the femur of a scented salamander. Besides being tough, the scented salamander's femur has a natural rough surface, good for anti-slipping. The scented salamander's femur is also easier to work on." Hei Zi spoke knowledgeably.

If a mech's parts were all made of skeleton, like Hei Zi's mech, an average engine would be enough for an outstanding speed performance. After all, speed is a critical weapon for victory! With

a proper engine, a full-skeleton mech would be able to fly everywhere at warp speed. The thought was enough to make Ye Chong nervous.

"How many of these can you make in a day?" Ye Chong asked carefully.

"How many can I make in a day?" Hei Zi shook his head and said, "You should be asking, how many days do I need to make one! Every time someone sent over their skeletons, they're always different, and before any work could begin, Master would have to examine them carefully and devise some reasonable way of approach. This usually takes days! If we come across an unfamiliar skeleton, it will take even longer! The next step is the crude processing of the skeletons. After that, we soak the skeletons in a special liquid, like a hardening liquid that makes the bones stronger. Master calls it the strengthening chemical.

"These strengthening chemicals were prepared by Aunt Guan. She's the best chemist around here. Soaking time depends on the skeletons, usually it takes 7 to 21 days.

"Next is the fine processing. Fine processing is the most complicated part of the craft. It's almost entirely done by hand. Any mistakes, and it's over, all previous efforts gone down the drain. That's why Master usually asks for at least two sets of skeletons. He'll make two products, just to be safe.

"You see these mech parts on the floor, they're all done by Master. Every time he passed one set of goods to his clients, there will be another set left here with us. These parts here were accumulated since Master began working here. Sigh, we nearly lost them due to the incident last time, but fortunately for Master, they were all returned to us by the sanctuary!

"Making a normal part usually takes at least half a month. If we're talking about something like a mech's main body, that'll take even longer. I remember the longest Master had ever worked

on a part was close to 3 months!"

"That long?" Ye Chong was surprised. In this technologically advanced society, where efficiency was worshipped, a normal mech could be manufactured in less than 10 minutes. If a single part would take half a month, one can only imagine the amount of time required to churn out the entire mech. However, Ye Chong quickly felt secretly relieved, since this meant that it was impossible to have a massive production of full-skeleton mechs. This was good news to Ye Chong. If these skeleton-only mechs could be manufactured in bulk, then the first to equip themselves with these skeleton mechs would be the Orbits' Mentalist Sanctuary. Since he had just raised havoc, it was only reasonable that they had begun searching for him. The stronger the Sanctuary was, the riskier it was for him! Ye Chong realized this!

"Full-skeleton mechs, how do they perform?" Ye Chong asked Hei Zi, thinking that since he owned a full-skeleton mech himself, he should be familiar with their pros and cons.

Hei Zi pondered for a moment before replying, "It's hard to say. Usually full-skeleton mechs are much lighter than mechs made of metal, and can fly longer! However, while the strength of the skeletons were greatly improved with the strengthening chemical, it was still slightly worse off compared to the mature workmanship with metals. So, skeleton mechs were usually not suitable for brute force combat, but more for fluid combat styles.

"Of course, that's what it usually is like. A skeleton mech's performance depends on the types of skeletons it's made of. As for the skeletons, they're usually quite different from one another. Some top quality skeletons can even be stronger than high-strength metals. However, these skeletons are usually much harder to process! Moreover, they're quite rare!

"But there's one important thing you should know. The price for a skeleton mech is on a whole different level than for average mechs. Besides, resupply and servicing would be very

inconvenient. If any of the skeleton parts were damaged, it's virtually impossible to repair it, the only way is to get a new one! So, unless you're a skeleton carver yourself, it'll be foolish to use a skeleton mech for usual business!"

Ye Chong could not help but nod in agreement - the man had a point! The advantages and disadvantages were clear, but Ye Chong could not afford to be choosy then - if he was offered a Blackbird right then, Ye Chong would probably accept it without hesitation, much less a skeleton mech that he had never even heard of!

Mu spoke in timely fashion, "Scanning is complete, there is a total of 372 parts. There are 3 recommendations for you. Ye, would you like to hear the details?"

Chapter 133: A Mech's Style

"Fifteenth from the left in the thirteenth row, that's the mech's main body; seventh from the left on the fifth row, eighth from the left on the twenty second row ... These are for the first combination." Mu's voice was steady and resolute.

Hei Zi stared stupidly at Ye Chong with bulging eyes. A moment earlier, Ye Chong began to pick his way through the parts like a butterfly flitting from flower to flower. The huge mech parts weighed like nothing in Ye Chong's hands. "This ... This is ridiculous!" Hei Zi massaged his temples in disbelief. While these were relatively lightweight skeleton parts, they were still parts for a mech; to lift them so effortlessly - was he human?

Ye Chong seemed to move with purpose. Hei Zi was confused - wasn't he listening to him all the while earlier? He was not eyeing those mech parts back then!

"What a strange guy!" Hei Zi muttered to himself!

Ye Chong looked at the three piles of mech parts laid before him. The three combinations that Mu proposed were now fully grouped together.

Ye Chong walked to the first pile of mech parts, frowned slightly in thought for a moment, and set down to work! One by one, the mech parts assembled themselves like magic through his hands. He moved adeptly like a professional mech assembler, and the whole process went smoothly. The mech presented itself before him, and it grew taller and taller from the legs upwards, giving the illusion of something growing rapidly upwards.

Hei Zi could feel his brain giving up!

Ye Chong stared with knitted brows at the three mechs before him.

While he was unsure of the performance of these three mechs, he

knew just from their appearance that they were all excellent products, definitely outstanding! Hei Zi stared dumbfounded at the three mechs without a word.

The three mechs had peculiar designs. They lacked the common metallic gleam found on average mechs, and had a unique quality of skeleton texture. Ye Chong believed that Mu's proposed combinations were most logical, but still, he felt that something was wrong!

"Strange, what is it?" Ye Chong frowned, studying the three mechs closely!

The three mechs were made of parts of all colors - since they were not originally part of the same set, they looked like a colorful mess, but these three combinations were excellent. Unlike Master's complete unfamiliarity with mechs, Hei Zi understood mechs at a deep level. The way he saw it, these parts, arranged artfully by Ye Chong, fit very well with each other, unlocking the potential of these parts to their maximum. They were perfect!

"Guy's a true genius!" Hei Zi grew respectful of Ye Chong. From his perspective, Ye Chong was only improvising, but this improvisation had led to such a degree of perfection. He knew all the parts here like the back of his hand, and had tried to assemble them together. However, no matter which combination he came up with, they cannot be compared with any of Ye Chong's three mechs. Besides, it took only a short moment for three mechs of this perfection to be produced!

Hei Zi believed that Ye Chong must be infinitely more knowledgeable about mechs than him!

Ye Chong was still deeply frowning, deep in thought.

Hei Zi did not noticed Ye Chong's perplexity; his eyes were only for the three mechs. If Shang were here and saw how the black-faced burly man could look at the three mechs with tender eyes, he would definitely not stop himself from snickering!

Ye Chong pondered over it, unsure of himself, and moved quickly towards the first mech.

"Ye, is there a problem?" Mu also thought it strange.

"Mu, don't you think there's something wrong with these three mechs?" Ye Chong's voice was uncertain.

"Wrong? In what sense?" Mu was curious.

After some hesitation, Ye Chong said, "I don't know, but I can feel that something is wrong."

"How is that possible? My calculations should be infallible!" Mu's voice held an arrogant undertone!

Ye Chong did not reply, but walked towards the first mech and began to disassemble it. "What's this?" Seeing Ye Chong suddenly beginning to disassemble the first mech, Hei Zi grew baffled and could not help but asked, "What're you disassembling it for?"

"Reassembling!" Ye Chong replied without looking back

"Reassembling? He's really out of the ordinary, to strive for perfection even with mechs of this perfection, no wonder he's miles ahead of me!" The honest Hei Zi grew even more respectful of Ye Chong.

Ye Chong disassembled the mech quickly. At least, Hei Zi had never seen anyone work as fast as him.

"Could I have assembled them wrong?" Ye Chong doubted himself first of all, since he was more likely to be at fault compared to Mu. Ye Chong even thought that the sense of wrongness was an illusion, since he could not exactly point out what was wrong about the mechs!

The fact was, Ye Chong was exposed to a great variety of mechs; with his own expertise, these exposures gradually developed a sense not unlike the intuition in him, and he could quickly evaluate a mech subconsciously. Like learning any language, when

a person studies up till a certain point, he would develop a grammar sense; when constructing a sentence, he might not know exactly why, but through a vague decision process, he may choose to replace a word with another more appropriate vocabulary. Of course, this vague decision is not completely infallible, but is still usually quite accurate.

Through unceasing practice and learning, this vague decision making process could be honed to a higher accuracy. It would also mean that the person has advanced to a higher plane of understanding.

These three mechs were obviously styled from mechs of the Orbits, and Mu's calculations and enhancements were based on physics. This method of combination was more suited for mechs like the MPA's, where mech technology was more advanced, and the mech models were the result of extensive calculations. Mechs from the Orbits mostly had a natural feel to them, and so the combinations based purely on mechanical and performance-enhancing factors were not in harmony with the design style.

Mu was only a PSI, and emotions were his weakness; hence, things like style, which were not data driven, were naturally not part of a mech's considerations.

Ye Chong was different. While he was always a logical thinking person, but it was inevitable as a human for him to have emotional senses. Due to his long experience with mechs, he had developed an acute awareness for them. While he could not pinpoint the exact source of the problem, he could sense the discord inside him.

Hei Zi, however, had not yet reached this level of sensitivity, and so did not notice it.

This vague feeling did not leave Ye Chong. He had reassembled the first mech thrive, but still could not see the problem. Ye Chong felt like he had reached a bottleneck, the solution to his troubles were ever closer but unreachable.

Ye Chong was vexed, but could not put his trouble into words for Mu.

If Ye Chong could one day understand his apparent intuition in great detail, it would mean that his knowledge in mechs would have reached a whole new level.

However, as Ye Chong was now, it would take him a very long time to reach that level by himself!

An ancient voice suddenly broke Ye Chong's increasingly confused thoughts, "Oh, these three mechs look good, only that the style is a little incompatible!"

Style! Ye Chong's eyes shone brightly as he realized then. "That's right! It's the style! The style!" he thought. Every mech has its own unique style. While these three mechs would perform well, their styles were not in harmony! No wonder he felt a little uncomfortable with them.

How should he proceed since he currently realized that style was the problem? Ye Chong's initial excitement gradually receded to calmness. Ideas flew past his mind, but only aimlessly; even if he knew that style was the problem, how should he proceed?

Ye Chong could not help but lift his head to the voice that triggered his realization, and found it to be Nan Nan's grandfather. He had focused intensely on disassembling the mech, and did not notice the time. The old man had already awakened from his nap and, upon returning to his workshop, found the three assembled mechs. The old man was a skeleton carver all his life, and had deep insights in abstract concepts such as mech styles. As he noticed the mechs, he could not help but comment on them, lending a hand to Ye Chong.

The old man saw Ye Chong turning to him, and smiled, "Who'd have thought you to be so knowledgeable in mechs. Looks like Hei Zi has much to learn from you, it's hard to have huge ambitions with just skeleton carving skills in this line of work!" The old man

ended his sentence blandly, probably dispirited from his inability to attain those huge ambitions that he had. The old man had become a master in skeleton carving, but his lack of knowledge in mechs had increasingly become a handicap for him.

Ye Chong lowered his head as though in thought, his expression hidden from the others.

They would not have guessed that Ye Chong was having an intense conversation with Mu.

"Mu, I want to learn how to make these skeleton parts!"

"Ye, our priority right now is to treat your illness, your current situation is very dangerous! Based on Lu Caite's information, we first have to leave the Orbits and find his teacher. That's what we should do now!" Mu was exceedingly calm.

"Hmm, you're right, but the incident with Guardian raised a huge ruckus, they're probably searching all over the Orbits for us now. It's not a good choice to leave the Orbits now. Besides, all the starships in the Orbits are under the control of the Sanctuary. Without the starships, it's impossible for us to leave the Orbits!" Ye Chong was equally in control of himself.

"You're right! Based on Lu Caite's information, you have to pass the so-called 5 tests by the Sanctuary! As it is, this is not a good time for us to take the tests! However, Ye, your health might suffer!" Mu was worried about Ye Chong's physical condition.

"Nothing we can do about that! As long as it's not fatal, I can handle it!" Ye Chong's plain words were spoken with incredible determination!

Chapter 134: The Sanctuary's Reaction

"Oh, so you want to learn the craft from me?" The old man looked at Ye Chong, deeply moved by his request. Ye Chong's earlier demonstration of his knowledge in mechs had impressed him. Hei Zi was looking delightfully at Ye Chong from the side. If Ye Chong could stay, then he would have someone to seek advice from! Since the beginning, he had always figured things out by himself, since Master could not help him in this respect.

"Yes!" Ye Chong replied steadily. After his discussion with Mu, they agreed that now was not the right time to take the five tests by the Sanctuary, since the situation outside must be tense! Going out recklessly now would be a foolish decision.

Ye Chong was not wrong. The situation was severely tense, much like what he imagined. Feng Su's report to the Sanctuary about Guardian's features and her thoughts on them had garnered great interest from the higher-ups. The report was collaborated by words from the MPA's mech pilots. Hence, the Sanctuary higher-ups had ordered for the retrieval of this potential game-changing mech at all cost.

All citizens of the Orbits realized in trepidation that something had happened. The Mentalist Sanctuary's forces were presented for the first time in full to the public. Even in the complicated environment such as the Orbits, they could still perform a thorough search of the area. No one dared to defy them; the first few rebellious people who refused to cooperate were met with indescribably horrible fates that chilled others to the bone! Such extreme methods employed by the usually moderate Sanctuary made everyone realize the firm resolution of the Sanctuary! With those few early examples, no one dared to challenge the Sanctuary's powers again!

That was how, long after that incident, the Orbits came to be as peaceful as Heaven itself.

Ye Chong was unaware of all these facts. This was much due to the fact that the Sanctuary had not reached their area in their search, and secondly, that Ye Chong himself did not go outdoors often.

The good natured Hei Zi was overjoyed by Master's acceptance of Ye Chong. He grinned stupidly, as if he was the one who was accepted instead. On the contrary, Ye Chong's expression was neither joyful nor disappointed; he was calm as usual, and this won the approval of the old man - he believed this apprentice of his would definitely be someone extraordinary one day.

Ye Chong began by learning basic carving skills. The old man was pleasantly surprised to find Ye Chong improving quickly! Basic carving skills were fundamentally a practice in strength control. This had always been part of Mu's training courses for Ye Chong, and Ye Chong was undoubtedly superior in it, second to none. This was the reason for his rapid improvement.

With a curved bone in his left hand, Ye Chong focused intently as his right hand wielded a carving knife, cutting vertically and horizontally. His every cut was precise, as his left hand held the bone steadily. The old man stood behind him, his expression portraying admiration. Beside Ye Chong was Hei Zi, staring unblinkingly at the knife in Ye Chong's hand, afraid of disturbing him. Little Nan Nan put her hands tightly over her mouth, as she watched the curved bone in Ye Chong's hand slowly took shape. Every since Ye Chong apprenticed under the old man, he had spent much of his time in the underground workshop, and little Nan Nan had followed him around like a puppy.

The solid curved bone was no match for Ye Chong's knife; with every cut of the knife, skeleton dust fell to the ground. Ye Chong put his knife down gently with an easy expression, devoid of any emotions. His left hand held a lifelike engulfer, one of the animals he was most familiar with. Hei Zi exhaled in relief at his side, and spoke enthusiastically, "Hah! Junior Brother [1] is really talented,

it's only been a few days, and you're already so good at this!"

It was Shang's turn to come out, and the mech spoke condescendingly in Ye Chong's mind, "What's the fuss? You call this talent? What a bumpkin!" Of course, Ye Chong ignored Shang's typical comments.

Little Nan Nan crawled onto the table and grabbed the engulfer out of Ye Chong's hands, savoring her new toy!

The old man approved of the work deeply, but kept his expression calm as he said, "Hmm, that's roughly it, you still need to practice more. From today onwards, you can learn about mechanical carving!"

He paused, but continued once Ye Chong was paying full attention to him, "Manual carving is usually for processing small parts or details of larger parts. We usually make do with mechanical carving. It's not hard, I might even say it's quite simple. The difficult part is in choosing the right skeleton materials. That'll take experience. Your job now is to familiarize yourself with all the skeleton materials we have here until you get the hang of it. I'll also be teaching you how to differentiate between them. That's the essence of being a skeleton carver ..."

Abruptly, the visitor's intercom on the wall rang, and interrupted the old man's word. Hei Zi quickly went to answer the intercom, and turned back to inform the old man loudly, "Master, it's Uncle Yan!"

The old man frowned slightly, and said to Hei Zi, "Alright, go invite him in!"

Hei Zi replied in an affirmative tone and left in a hurry.

The old man spoke softly to himself, "Strange, why's he here now?"

After a short moment, Hei Zi came back with a huge man.

The man was tall and muscular in build, his profile came with

stiff angles, framing a pair of sharp eyes. His every move exuded a sense of power. Ye Chong realized then he was strong! Ye Chong was now quite experienced, and could tell just from the man's build and movement that he was not someone to mess with. Ye Chong guessed right - this man with the surname Yan was called Yan Bingxuan, a patrolman of the area.

As the huge man stepped in, his eyes swept across the room. The sight of Ye Chong surprised him.

Hei Zi did not seem like to like this Yan guy, and brought little Nan Nan out to play.

The old man spoke, "Yan, something must have happened for you to visit us!" He then turned to Ye Chong and said, "Ye, this is the Sanctuary's patrolman for our area, he's quite strong! You can just call him Uncle Yan! His support will be very helpful for you in future!" He turned back to Yan Bingxuan and said, "This is my new apprentice, he's quite knowledgeable about mechs, please take care of him from now on, Yan!"

Yan Bingxuan replied modestly, "Master Ge, you're too courteous! The Sanctuary has explicitly ordered for your protection! It is my duty to attend to your safety. As long as it is within my means, it's no problem at all!" Yan Bingxuan sounded respectful, and his words were flattering, but the meaning behind those words were not at all what they seemed to be. If he refused to cooperate, he could just easily say that it was not within his means.

Ye Chong realized then that Master's surname is Ge.

The old man had a rich life experience, and could not possibly be ignorant of these social niceties. Even he himself had not truly meant his words.

Yan Bingxuan was impressed. "To think that such a young man could be approved by Old Ge, he has a bright future ahead of him!"

Ye Chong reciprocated lightly, "You're too generous! I have much

to learn!"

"Yan, what brings you here today?" The old man was getting impatient with these customary exchanges.

"You must not have heard, the world's turned upside down out there!" Yan Bingxuan spoke mysteriously.

The old man knitted his brows in response. "What happened?"

"Word is, two people stole something from the Sanctuary, and the Sanctuary's higher-ups were outraged! Sigh, it's regretful that this had happened on this planet! For now, all the starship flights are cancelled. The higher-ups want us to search every house for the thieves. It's fine for the higher-ups to be furious, but in the end, it's we lackeys who have to do the work!" Yan Bingxuan grumbled insincerely as he discreetly watched for their reactions.

Ye Chong was startled. As expected, they must be referring to him and Mu. However, to frame them for thievery was impudent. Ye Chong was extremely calm on the outside, and Shang immediately came out and spoke to him urgently, "Ye, don't act so calmly, you gotta show some surprise!" Ye Chong immediately affected a slight surprise on his expression, fitting for his nature.

The old man was shocked. "Someone dared to steal something from the Sanctuary?"

Seeing that both of them had reacted normally, Yan Bingxuan finally relaxed and smiled wryly, "Right? Those two must have some b*lls to do this. The Sanctuary's people had seen them as they escaped in their mechs, one of it is a badly beaten down mech with four arms and two heads. Old Ge, have you seen anything like this before?"

Ye Chong was startled on the inside, but kept his expression calm.

"Four arms and two heads? A strange mech like that? No! If I've seen a strange mech like that, I would have remembered it!" The

old man shook his head. Ye Chong was quietly thankful that Hei Zi and little Nan Nan were not there. If they had seen Yu Di, they would have immediately exposed him then.

"Sigh, that's right! To find two people in such a huge area is much like finding a needle in a haystack!" Yan Bingxuan vented his dissatisfaction.

The old man nodded. "It's definitely not easy!"

Yan Bingxuan produced a metallic sphere, flashing green lights, and apologized to the old man, "Old man, my apologies, it's merely a formality!"

The old man waved his hand and spoke lightly, "It's alright, do what you have to!" He saw Ye Chong watching the metallic sphere curiously, and explained to him, "That's a special accessory for the patrolmen, called Life Seeker. Nothing alive can evade its detection! It is used to check for any hidden humans or animals. Understood?"

Ye Chong realized then of its purpose. "Understood!"

A small aperture on the Life Seeker projected a holographic image, showing five green dots on it. Yan Bingxuan counted everyone present, including himself, and found it to be exactly five. He kept the Life Seeker and spoke with a smile. "All good! Pardon the intrusion, Old Ge!"

"It's nothing!" The old man did not mind.

Yan Bingxuan continued, "Well, that's all to it, I'll be taking my leave!"

"Hei Zi!" The old man yelled, and Hei Zi rushed in as he instructed, "See Uncle Yan off! Yan, I'll not be sending you off!"

Yan Bingxuan quickly replied, "No need to! Please continue your work, Old Ge!" He began to move towards the steps that he came in through.

Suddenly, Yan Bingxuan stopped in his tracks, and exclaimed, "Huh?"

Could there be something wrong? Ye Chong, freshly relieved, was jerked back into suspense!

Chapter 135: Conjecture

Yan Bingxuan stopped in his tracks, his face full of surprise!

"Where did I give myself away?" Ye Chong jolted inside, all his muscles tensed, and his naturally hanging arms shifted to an anticipatory posture. The moment Yan Bingxuan showed any signs of hostility, Ye Chong would kill him without hesitation! Even if the opponent's physique suggested a difficult enemy, Ye Chong was still confident that he could take care of his enemy before he could send a warning signal to the others!

"Full-skeleton mechs?" Yan Bingxuan's face betrayed his pleasant surprise as he turned to the old man, "Master Ge, have you finally made a full-skeleton mech? Are these three mechs your latest work? They're absolutely amazing!"

Ye Chong's whole body relaxed at that, and his arms discreetly returned to their natural hanging posture! He was, however, somewhat curious. Were full-skeletons mechs so out of the ordinary? Could there be something to them?

Ye Chong was not aware that the old man was the only person was skilled in using skeletons to make mech parts. However, the old man was a total stranger to mechs, and did not understand the design functionalities of mech parts. Hence, his products were often not as desired, and had a high probability of malfunctioning. Even though the old man had made every part of a mech with skeletons, putting all of them together and having the parts working in tandem would inevitably amplify the defects of each individual part, and the mech's safety rating would be extremely low.

Full-skeleton mechs were but an ideology. Even though Hei Zi's mech looked like a full-skeleton mech, there were still a considerable number of parts in it made of non-skeleton material, and so it did not qualify as a full-skeleton mech.

Ever since the Sanctuary knew of the old man's skill in producing skeleton mech parts, the Sanctuary had offered him protection. Yan Bingxuan was responsible for the old man's safety, besides making periodic reports about his working progress.

Now that there were three full-skeleton mechs right in front of him, how could he not be shocked? He knew from the grapevine that the Sanctuary was also trying to produce full-skeleton mechs. However, their progress was slow, and so the Sanctuary placed great importance on the old man.

Full-skeleton mechs would offer enviable features - better automotive control, longer flight distances, and most importantly, outstanding anti-detection capabilities. This would be a great advantage in battle.

The old man was pleased. "Hehehe, Yan, even you can guess wrong sometimes! These were not the handiwork of a miserable old man like me. This apprentice of mine had carelessly assembled them, but they're not really full-skeleton mechs. Ah, but this young man here has real potential in making a real full-skeleton mech!" His words were regretful, but his tone suggested a certain pride in his apprentice.

"The young man certainly doesn't seem like it!" Yan Bingxuan was now truly shocked! No matter how he looked at him, the young man had seemed unremarkable - he looked thin and frail, but was actually an expert in mech assembly. When did the old man accept this apprentice? Yan Bingxuan grew suspicious. "I've been too relaxed with my job here recently," Yan Bingxuan thought pensively to himself. "I must look into this later. Hmm, better take good care of this young one to avoid any mishaps, if he can make a full-skeleton mech, it'll be under my account, and I'll definitely move up the power ladder!"

Yan Bingxuan was circumspect, and kept his emotions to himself as he smiled and said, "Master Ge, you're truly blessed! With an able apprentice, you'll finally have a successor!"

The old man's half-lidded eyes were full of joy, but he said, "He's not really a full apprentice yet, there's much to learn! It's too early to speak of these things!"

Yan Bingxuan noted to himself to visit the place more often and get familiar the future skeleton carver; it would be helpful for his career. However, he understood that this was an overnight task, and so, with his decision made, Yan Bingxuan bid farewell to everyone and continued on his job.

After Yan Bingxuan left, Ye Chong exhaled in relief. The old man turned to him and spoke seriously, "Ye, in future, be careful to this man, don't trust him too much, understand? He might not be entirely sincere, but, if you met any difficult problems around here you can still ask for his help, he's still quite influential in this area."

"Yes!" Ye Chong nodded in understanding.

"Alright, let's forget about him! From today onwards I'll teach you how to recognize and differentiate between skeletons! This is also something basic! Now all skeletons are suitable to made into mech parts. Let's start from the basics ..."

Ye Chong was safe, and the Mentalist Sanctuary's efforts were to no avail. The Sanctuary was infuriated, and blamed it on the incompetence of their patrolmen. The patrolmen received the blame indignantly, and vented their frustrations on any local organization that they set their eyes on. Thus, all organizations lost their presence and power almost overnight, and vanished without a trace.

The Sanctuary's failure was actually largely due to their erroneous deductions. Based on Feng Su's report, everyone had deduced that the mech pilot controlling the golden miniature mech must be physically strong. It would have otherwise been impossible for the pilot to bear the consequences of piloting the mech.

He also had a companion! That meant that there were two of them, and one of them should look physically strong. This was why Yan Bingxuan did not suspect Ye Chong to be the one he was looking for when he saw him!

Under the old man's careful guidance, Ye Chong dealt with skeletons every day and grew experienced quickly. The old man was grateful for Ye Chong's good memory and sharp mind.

The three mechs that Ye Chong assembled were taken by the Sanctuary's men the next day, but of course, they had left many rare skeletons in return, and the incident was considered as a barter of goods. Ye Chong did not mind them, since the three mechs were obviously full of issues. The old man had made all those parts without understanding their use, but only based fully on the schematics and measurements provided by his clients. Ye Chong was certain that those three mechs must be prone to malfunctions!

The Sanctuary's men felt otherwise. From their perspective, these were just about full-skeleton mechs. Besides, the parts assembled based on Mu's suggestions resulted in excellent performance, and the Sanctuary's mech pilots were all overjoyed! As for the one who brought the news to the Sanctuary, Yan Bingxuan was duly rewarded.

On the other hand, Hei Zi had approached Ye Chong discreetly later and asked Ye Chong, "Ye, were you the thief?"

Ye Chong replied calmly, "The one they're looking for is me, but it's they who want to steal my things!"

Hei Zi's expression was one of realization, and he warned Ye Chong out of kindness, "I thought so, how could you have been stealing? Then you have to take care now, the Sanctuary's always tyrannical! I'll make sure little Nan Nan keeps your mech a secret, little Nan Nan is very sensible!"

"Okay!" Ye Chong replied lightly, and watched as Hei Zi left him,

but he was moved inside. Shang, however, was laughing coldly in Ye Chong's mind, "Ye, have you really never stolen anything? I think Harmony of the Winter Aria was the result of your thievery, tsk tsk, how could anyone think of you as a nice person? What a joke!"

He was undecided if he should laugh or cry at those words, but he also had no valid rebuttal for them.

Suddenly, Shang sighed dramatically, "Sigh, Ye, how long are we staying in this ragged place? What a bore! There's not even a beauty in sight! Without beauties, how can we train your sense of beauty? Life is so dull!" He affected a yawned. "Ye, you should finish learning these things quickly, so we can finally leave this God forsaken place, and return to the wonders of life! I very much look forward to that!"

Ye Chong can imagine that Shang's blue bionic eyes must now be flashing in deep longing. If Shang had any cleaning fluid left in his mouth, he would definitely leave it dripping from his mouth like saliva.

"I think the situation now is quite alright, it's peaceful and fulfilling. More importantly, I'm getting stronger!" Of course, Ye Chong did not agree with Shang, or Shang would have egged him on to leave the place earlier.

"Sigh, how could I have forgotten that you and Mu are the same, lacking the same appreciation of life's many joys? Heavens above! Why are you cruel to leave me between two dull, tasteless, lifeless creations of yours? Could I have sinned too much before?" Shang wailed.

"Before? Shang, did you find out anything about yourself from before?" Ye Chong grew attentive.

"Much of the information has been lost, and not recoverable. However, based on what we have, I and Mu have a conjecture." Speaking of this topic, Shang's tone became serious.

"What conjecture?" Ye Chong was encouraged. If it was Mu's deductions, the probability of him getting it right was high. Mu and Shang's past was always something Ye Chong was very interested in.

"Remember that time with the warship? Mu found that our database has information on the warship, and I was shocked. I guessed then that we're probably related to the MPA. Besides, our information on this Twin Moon Corvette is quite detailed, almost as detailed as its original schematics. Later on, our information was proved to be entirely accurate! From this, you can see that we must be related to the MPA, and probably quite closely."

"The MPA?" Ye Chong started. He had never expected Mu and Shang to be related to the MPA. Thinking of their current relationship with the MPA, Ye Chong could not help but shake his head and smile wryly.

Shang's voice turned gentle, "Ye, don't worry too much, we're not too concerned over our past. The one who reactivated us is you. No one but you can ever communicate with us again, much less control us. Besides, we have various information on the MPA, that would be extremely helpful to you!"

"Yes, I know!" Ye Chong replied plainly. They were his most loyal and trustworthy companions, almost like his siblings. With the tacit understanding between them, there was no need for more words.

"Besides, it's only a conjecture, its validity remains to be proven!" Shang replied in a rare moment of solemnity.

Chapter 136: Progressing

A shiny mechanical arm gripped onto a half-disc. The disc was as thin as a leaf, its surface burnished into perfect smoothness, and the red skeleton grains sprawling on it were like an abstract art of lines. At its center were three holes that could each fit a finger, arranged to form a triangle.

Ye Chong examined the disc closely, his mind rapidly calculating as he recalled all the knowledge about skeletons passed down by the old man to him, trying to find the best approach based on what he knew. Unlike the old man and Hei Zi, Ye Chong had a solid theoretical foundation, all thanks to the unique teaching methods by the elders at Aurora.

In this fickle and materialistic society, foundational theories in all academic subjects were largely unappreciated. Moreover, since mech foundational theories were cross-disciplinary, they were more complicated and massive, such that there was no single unifying system for them. What Ye Chong had learned were the conclusions of the Aurora's elderlies from their lifelong work. They had studied mechs all their lives, and found in their later years that those previously ignored foundational theories were the most fundamental of all. Hence, to prevent Ye Chong from repeating their mistakes, everything that they taught Ye Chong began from the most fundamental level.

Ye Chong had unwittingly been nurtured by them to become the most peculiar mech engineer across all fields.

Ye Chong had a rectangular metallic tank placed before him, filled with silver liquid. The calm surface of the liquid was like a flawless mirror, reflecting Ye Chong perfectly. Hei Zi watched anxiously from the side at the disc gripped by the mechanical arm. This was the most important step, immersing the disc into the strengthening chemical. The immersing duration, angle, proportion and so on, all contributed to the final quality of this

part.

The disc's early processing was all done by Ye Chong, and now he faced the final step - immersion. Immersion was the unique process of immersing a part into the strengthening chemical to enhance the skeleton's various properties.

Ye Chong sat calmly in front of the controls dashboard, which directly manipulated the mechanical arm. The controls were more intricate and complicated than a mech's controls. The holographic screen projected from the controls' photon processor clearly reflected from Ye Chong's pupils.

Ye Chong was feeling serious. After all, up until this step, Ye Chong had done everything perfectly. Once this step was successfully done, that part might be the most perfect skeleton part ever made.

Ye Chong had laboured through repeated considerations and calculations from the very first step of choosing the right materials. He had picked the sternum of a Moonblood bird; he even took this Moonblood's skeleton to the old man for inspection. The next step was designing, and after carefully analysis of the Moonblood's skeleton, he finally decided to make it into a mech engine's padding. After that was crude processing and fine burnishing; Ye Chong partook every step after careful consideration, and his execution was also exact.

All this time, immersing was the most complicated step, and the effects were highly random. Even the old man had carried out immersions based on experience, without any logical theory behind them.

Unlike his sombre expression, Ye Chong was calm inside. No one knew that Ye Chong was actually quite confident with this last step. Ye Chong had discovered early on the randomness of the immersion process, and he had studied it closely, and through repeated experimentation, found a few ways to greatly increase the

success rate of the method. He was now finally presented an opportunity to test his conclusions.

Ye Chong entered a series of commands into the photon processor of the controls dashboard. He then set the controls from manual to auto mode, and left the dashboard.

The mildly anxious Hei Zi abruptly noticed Ye Chong coming to his side, and could not help but be startled. "Ye, why are you here?"

"The settings are complete, no need for me to control it!" Ye Chong explained calmly. As he finished, the mechanical arm began to move slowly.

"Ah!" Hei Zi gasped in shock. "Ye, how can you use auto mode? Quick, shut it down!" He rushed towards the controls dashboard, but was held back by Ye Chong.

Seeing Ye Chong's indifference, Hei Zi panicked. "Ye, quick! That thing's going to be ruined! Master had never used auto mode for immersions! Ye, stop the machine, quick, or it'll be too late!" Hei Zi's hoarse voice was filled with urgency.

Ye Chong's hands gripped onto Hei Zi tightly like shackles, and no matter how much Hei Zi struggled, he could not free himself. He immediately realized how much stronger his junior brother was compared to him.

Ye Chong understood his concern for himself, and while he was personally moved, he kept his expression flat as he replied, "Hmm, just wait and look!"

Between their exchanges, the mechanical arm had finished its job, and the disc was now lying quietly in the drying oven.

Ye Chong then let go of Hei Zi's wrist, and Hei Zi rushed immediately to the drying oven. He opened the oven hastily and took out the disc, examining it closely.

"Ah! How is this possible?" Hei Zi gasped again in surprise, staring at the disc in his hand in disbelief.

In the underground workshop.

The old man studied the half-disc in his hands closely, his expression one of satisfaction. The padding was flawless no matter how he looked at it! What impressed him more was that Ye Chong could produce this masterpiece in such a short time. As the old man imagined the day that his apprentice could inherit and the spread this craftsmanship, how could he not feel thankful?

"Ye, Hei Zi said you used auto mode during immersion for this padding?" The old man asked with half-lidded eyes.

"Yes. I stumbled upon a few ways to increase the success rate of immersion, and I've recorded them in a chip and gave it to Senior Brother [1]!" Ye Chong did not show any signs of showing off, as he attributed his findings as a result of "stumbling upon" them.

Hei Zi nodded at the side, complimenting him, "Yes, Master, Junior Brother's methods are effective, I've tried a few times and they all worked!" Hei Zi grinned widely.

The old man nodded in approval and said, "Hmm, not bad, not bad! Ye, your fundamentals are strong, and you're a quick study, with excellent memory. While you may have begun later than your Senior Brother, you have understood more and at a deeper level. Your future is limitless. Your Senior Brother is an honest man, you must take care of him!"

"Yes!" Ye Chong's reply was short and determined, and came sincerely from him.

"What you lack now is experience, and that is something I cannot teach you. Only through practice can you accumulate experience. Your task from now on is to practice every day. You may choose your own tasks, and the skeletons there are yours to use." The old man pointed at a huge pile of skeletons.

"Yes!" Ye Chong nodded.

The old man pondered for a while before speaking again, "Ye,

you're smart, and have learnt just about everything there is here. If you're willing, go learn alchemy from Guan Leng. After all, if you don't know alchemy, you'll have to depend on others for the strengthening chemical, that makes it easy for you to be dependent! However, your Aunt Guan is ill tempered, and you'll be in for a hard time if you go. Hmm, I'll leave this decision to you!"

Guan Leng was an alchemist living nearby, and all the strengthening chemicals here came from her. She behaved oddly, and was often mad as a hatter. However, her skills in chemical synthesis were extraordinary - she prepared almost all the strengthening chemicals based on the old man's requirements.

For some reason, she always granted the old man's wishes. For other people, it would depend on her mood.

Periodically, when the strengthening chemicals were running out, Ye Chong and Hei Zi would visit her to obtain more. Hei Zi disliked visiting, and upon noticing Ye Chong's indifference to the crazy lady, he had assigned the drudging task to Ye Chong.

For such an excellent alchemist, she remained largely unknown in the entirety of the Orbits. That was a small surprise to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong already knew the formula for the strengthening chemical. After Mu and Shang did their scanning, all the components of the strengthening chemical were recorded. Ye Chong was afraid of running out of the strengthening chemical in the future, since he would ultimately leave this place.

"What a good idea! Ye, you should go learn from her! She's definitely capable. All these types of strengthening chemicals were from her original formulae, that's awesome! Ye, best if you can learn some ways to grow Do Kun stone! Wah, then we'll be rich!" Shang could not help but come out, very much enthusiastic.

Ye Chong tried very hard to stop himself from rolling his eyes, as he did not want to appear disrespectful to the old man. However,

Shang's words had indeed made him feel helpless - what a money-grubber!

However, the mech had also reminded Ye Chong of his earlier days in Blue Ocean Academy. For some reason, he missed those times, although he cannot quite figure out why.

The old man's words interrupted his reverie. "Hmm, Ye, I did not forget your strange illness! Don't worry, once you're skillful enough, you'll definitely pass the Sanctuary's tests. Then, you'll be able to leave the Orbits and search for doctors elsewhere! Beside, with the Sanctuary's powerful influence, gathering all sorts of talents, they might know what to do with you."

Ye's strange illness had resulted in two episodes in his time here, frightening both Hei Zi and Nan Nan. When the old man heard of it and came to him, Ye Chong had already recovered.

For Ye Chong, asking for help from the Sanctuary was one big joke! Ye Chong could barely hide from them; if he were to present himself to the Sanctuary, was that not asking for death? This solution was immediately rejected by Ye Chong!

"Hmm, alchemist ... Do Kun stone ... The Sanctuary's tests ..."

A flash of realization flickered in Ye Chong's eyes.

Chapter 137: Lunatic Guan

Lunatic Guan's home was rather messy, one could step into a pile of utilities or miscellaneousness right by the entrance. Ye Chong had to lift his every step in caution or he would actually initiate an avalanche from the mountain piles of items in the room and be engulfed by it. The scene reminded him of the trashes back on Trash Planet-12 though.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk," Shang's voice rang. He sounded impressed, "It looked like you had met quite an intriguing lady." It was for the women again, of course, "Eh, it felt like an old spinster with mentality issues? Kekeke, Ye, take care and good luck!" Shang rejoiced the catastrophe coming to our hero soon.

Ye Chong did not seem to be interested in joining Shang's chatter. However, as he understood deep in his heart that no matter what sort of reply he made, be it sarcasm or bland statement, it would only make the artificial intelligence more excited. So Ye Chong decided to give the artificial intelligence some silent treatment, let him have his slice of self-indulgence in relationship that Ye Chong could never convey.

"Kekekeke..." Shang teasingly laughed on, "Ay! Almost forgot! Ye your heart did not belong to the outside, it's all belonged to that fist-fighting lass! ... Kek... Ye, I feel your heartbeat racing~!" Shang's pride was demonstrated through the mechanical ups-and-downs in his tone.

The garb of pure whiteness flashed in his mind as the veins on his forehead pumped uncontrollably, his nose sensed as hooked by the strange aroma again, and his tongue felt coated by the slipperiness of something before...

And Ye Chong actually zoned out for a moment.

He was pulled back to the ground of the Orbits after perceiving sounds of graceless footsteps by his ears.

He took a look at the hazy Lunatic Guan in her hangover.

Lunatic Guan was around 28 to 29 years old, she was rather demure, judging by how Shang exclaimed upon seeing her... although it would be a killing challenge to ask Ye Chong to judge from his view. Her mind was still on the other side of the Orbits, she was sort of unconscious, flushed and disheveled, with her shirt sliding to one side, exposing that fair left shoulder of hers. Her breasts were magically appearing back and fro through the loosened clothing of hers. She seemed to be unaware of her striptease... in spite of that, as the cup rested upside down in her slender hand like herself.

Gasp!

It was not Ye Chong. He heard it clearly from Shang. Nevertheless after attending loyally to Shang's every motivational session, none of his outrageous behavior seemed to surprise Ye Chong anymore.

Ye Chong simply did not get it, the way of how one judged someone's appearance. Fundamentally, everyone has the same number of eyes, ears, nose and mouth. Nothing strikingly different there was. Certainly Ye Chong could understand the fact that there are differences at some point. For instance, he was well-aware of the differences in his eyes and ears, as his sight and hearing were way more sensitive; for his smell and taste though, they were slightly inferior. However! Ye Chong could never be convinced the fact that one could justify such difference of strength at first sight, even for someone like Mu!

If that was the case, probably such difference in strength was not one of the factors contributing to the so-called "aesthetic judgment" by Shang.

Assuming it was based on the facial muscularity in actuality... Well, Ye Chong believed he lacked such knowledge as he could hardly imagine how the muscles on one's face could do anything

positive to combats. If these lumps could do no good in battle, how would one determine their quality? Presuming that Shang meant hair, that would do nearly nothing to battle too! In fact, it was on the contrary - having an overgrown hair would affect the progress of the battle negatively. So it would be most appropriate to stay bald provided that one was on Trash Planet.

Bald would be considered the beauty then...

But Ye Chong had never heard Shang complimenting a bald female!

Then how the heck do I even judge one's beauty? Ye Chong was utterly dumbfounded. It was challenging indeed!

"Ahh..." A mechanical moan from Shang beeped by, "Oh my Fal... Oh heavens, how in the world? How in the world there would lie such an absolute beauty at such a shabby place? Ye, I'm done! Ye, I. Am. Done. For!"

"Shang, what's wrong?" Ye Chong was startled.

"Umm, Ye." His voice was shaking, "This is what we called 'being shot by the arrow'. And I'm sure I had been shot."

"Arrow?" Ye Chong panicked as he looked around quickly, but there was nothing... although Ye Chong still kept his guard high, "Could it be a new form of archery? Of using a projectile of invisibility? Wave-based arrows? No! It is a ray arrow?" Ye Chong got into his stance right away, awaiting the moment Shang confirmed the wounding strike. Then he would deploy the Guardian and blast off in the speed of light instantly. With the Guardian they would be in good hands, it had to be this female who assassinated Shang, then Ye Chong would kill this despicable feline at the quickest speed possible so he could spend more time to find this ballista of revolutionary in leisure!

ZZzt!

Shang almost crashed himself! "Ye, do you really have not the

slightest humanity?"

"Humanity? But Shang, you said you got shot, I clearly heard it! Mhm, considering how weaponry this ancient could do you no harm, it has to be a new kind of weapon that involves ray beams or some sort of impulsive waves. That would be more likely." Ye Chong's tone was dead serious.

Zzt! It was super effective.

Shang fainted... nearly. "Ye, have you not heard of the arrow of Cupid?"

"Arrow of Cu-what?" Ye Chong did not understand it. "What company makes it? What's the exact specs? The model? The brand? What does it do exactly? What are the capacities? I don't think I have seen such a sophisticated product before..." Ye Chong was dead serious, pondering.

ZzZZzt!

Shang could not hold it any longer, he launched a full barrel of lecture, "Ye, you freaking beast! Could you be a little more normal sometimes? You don't even know the arrow of Cupid? You and your bloody head filled with endless fighting, killing, massacre and your bloody mechs and your bloody modifications! When in the century would you learn the true meaning of life?" The very last sentence was uttered romantically in stark sentiments by Shang, which tickled Ye Chong from the soul, that his hair went standing.

"Does it have anything to do with this?" Ye Chong was bewildered. Well it seemed like Shang was not attacked, so it was a relief.

"Ay..." Shang was depressed, "I must admit it was my misconduct to have left you in such demise. Talking about the true meaning of life with you, is like talking to walls. Nothing productive comes back."

"But Mu said walls do produce something. They produce echoes

and the sound reflects back." rebutted Ye Chong.

"Oh my Fal Galaxy. Holy matrimony! What kind of ... thing! Are both of you? Heavens what have I done to stay with both of them?" Shang's tone was filled with tears, he howled in grief.

"HMMMMMMMMMM?" a sweet tone going upwards pretentiously.

"Ye, my cute Ye boy, what is that stare? Missing me? Loving the good old me?" Lunatic Guan's eyes were hazier than ever, tripping her steps, collapsing anytime it seemed. The tone was seductive.

"Magnefique! This is gorgeous!" Shang exclaimed. "Ye, do you know what it is? It's known as the Twirling Tongue Tease! According to a research on women, ladies who spoke in such tease hold an alluring arousing appearance - a God's gift! I never knew, never knew the slightest, that in a filthy place like this, a beauty, a beauty of such otherworldliness stood, just stood right there!" No one seemed to get what Shang was saying anymore... his tone was intensely passionate that it felt like some gibberish generated from dictionary.

No doubt, Ye Chong did not understand a single sentence uttered by this lunatic indulgence. He probably only got the part where Shang emphasized on how good Lunatic Guan was. She's... good? His eyes were rolled into the realm of his head, wondering how Hei Zi would be jumping around and seeing the dinner he had last night returning if he heard what Shang had said.

Ye Chong took a careful look at Lunatic Guan, still, he did not identify anything good on her... other than her hands. They were a nice pair of hands, which they were fair, with great proportion. Ye Chong's eyes could even discern the fine distribution of muscles on the arms. Slender yet agile hands! The downside though... Ye Chong was sighing, the skin was too fair. Fragile, feeble, torn upon touch, the defense would be poor.

But thinking of how she was actually a chemist who fought in a laboratory with chemicals, rather than a real hand-to-hand

fighting, Ye Chong was confused of his judgment once again.

Lunatic Guan had gotten used to Ye Chong's silence, just like how Ye Chong had gotten used to her drunk lunatic self. Most of his visits happened to spot her alcoholic self slurring and rolling around while twitching in some insanity sometimes, which were the reasons why Hei Zi showed reluctance of paying her a visit and also why her name being "Lunatic" Guan.

"Oh... Gulp. Don't tell... Don't tell me, you had finished your... your... strengthening liquid... che-chemical again..." She swung her cup, "Wait... no. You had taken tons before this... You-You can't have used all up already..." Lunatic Guan was shocked and she giggled as she teased, "So... you did miss the good old me, eh? Ye my boy. Hahahaha, hmm? Why don't, why don't, I accompany our poor, poor, poor lonely Ye boy tonight? Only tonight!"

"Holy!" Shang sounded mesmerized, "Gorgeous!" He sounded impatient, "Ye, say yes to that statement, go green light! Please make sure you accept the world's greatest offer!"

Of course Ye Chong directly showed ignorance towards the unwanted cheerleading counseling service.

"It's not about the strengthening chemical, ma'am." Ye Chong spoke on, "Master called me here to learn about alchemy from Aunt Guan."

Lunatic Guan flinched... and then she began making glances over Ye Chong, "Well, I can't tell at first sight. Looks like your master had some expectations on you... for he actually asked you here to learn alchemy from me. How could I miss such hint? Tsk, tsk, they say you shouldn't judge a wine by its bottle and I guess it's true. The good old me had seen it wrong!" She probably meant "judge a book by its cover"...

"Well," Ye Chong asked abruptly. "What does Aunt Guan think about this?"

"Kekekekekekeke... Jajajajaja..." Lunatic Guan went lunatic for a moment, "Ay, Ye my little boy, how many times must I remind you? Call me Sister! 'Aunt Guan, this.' and 'Aunt Guan, that', you and your naming are making me old!" She might had gone lunatic, but Ye Chong saw her hand holding the cup, her fingers twirling the handle, justifying the fact that she was considering it.

So Ye Chong stayed quiet as he waited for a clear, conscious reply from her.

...

... ..

It was a moment of silence between both of them.

The fingers stopped twirling. "So, what do you think?" Ye Chong quickly spoke, in his usual monotonous tone.

Lunatic Guan looked quite surprised. Apparently she did not expect Ye Chong to grasp the timing so accurately.

The cheeky smile on her face vaporized somehow. Her expression was stern out of sudden, which Ye Chong saw it the first time ever on her. Her bottomless pupils rolled over Ye Chong and rolled back to the center, as she looked into the cup, her words fell slow, "If it's an order by your master, if you really wanted to come here and learn alchemy, I wouldn't mind..." Her voice trailed off.

"Mhm. Conditions? What about the conditions?" asked Ye Chong with his still face.

"Well, conditions, there's none..." Lunatic Guan's eyes looked greatly impressed, "If you want to learn alchemy from me, there are indeed a few rules and regulations from me. If you could not obey them, I won't be teaching you at all, even if your master came and tried convincing me," the last sentence went grim.

"Ok," Ye Chong was not horrified. "State it," his tone fell flatly.

"First, what your master intended was probably for you to master the formula of a few kinds of strengthening liquid. But, since you came for me, I'll decide what I want to teach and you can leave only after I admitted your expertise in this! You cannot simply leave on a whim anytime before this. Of course, you are allowed to get back to your master occasionally," she spoke serenely.

"No problem," Ye Chong replied after a moment of pondering,

"Second, you are my student and you will do as what I have instructed, no doubt, no bargain and most importantly, no slacking!"

"Okay."

"Third, whatever place I forbid you to go and whatever item I disallow you to touch, do not, ever, go, and do not, ever, touch it! If I caught you, you better be able to face the consequences." Though the regulation came nonchalantly, Ye Chong could smell the danger between the words for some reason.

"I am not a curious person to begin with," Ye Chong was confident of this side of his personality.

"Think it through," stated Lunatic Guan.

"Done it," replied Ye Chong. "I agree."

"Are you sure?"

"Sure."

"Hm, alright. For starters, clean this room, organize everything." The first instruction was tossed over Ye Chong as Lunatic Guan burped, turned and walked away in grace.

"Ye."

"Regarding those words..."

"Ye, I'm taking every word that I've said!" No cure for regrets, Shang... Horrified Shang upon seeing the piling junks in the room. His mechanical heart ran colder than ever.

Chapter 138: Ye Chong's Tutorial

The piles of utilities were not much of an issue for Ye Chong since cleaning rubbish was like the bread and butter for someone who grew up on Trash Planet like him. It was as easy as ABC.

Ye Chong was so efficient at it that even Shang got surprised, "Ye, I never knew you have such talent! You are such a skillful cleaner. Well, that means even if we got out one day, you could be a good maid and you could earn decently to pay for your living and our fuel! Mhm, apparently being a maid is not just for anyone and it certainly requires some standard of skills."

Ye Chong ignored the artificial intelligence again as he took a glance at the room, which had become spotless and refreshing. Technically he just discarded whatever that looked useless to him and a majority of them turned out to be clothing. Like for Pete's sake, who would buy these many clothes? Won't she feel inconvenient of changing into different clothings constantly?

Without hesitation, these grimy clothing were all thrown.

Seeing how the room got all tidied up, spick and span, Ye Chong was satisfied, though he did accidentally "over-clean" a few pieces of floorings as they were too dirty... He wiped the specks to a bin.

The next few days passed under the Lunatic Guan's signature giggling and mumbling. She did not regard Ye Chong in a bit.

Well Ye Chong was not in a rush as there were simply too many things he could do to kill time. Meditation alone could already consume a huge portion of his hours, since his talent to this was much more measly than most of the people. In spite of that, he kept it up, after working hard for so long, he made some breakthrough a few days back finally - he started to feel that wave of oddity faintly wafting around him.

This was more than encouraging to Ye Chong. After witnessing

the unique battle style conducted by these pilots from the sanctuary, he had always believed in how mental training was the root of their existence.

His mindset was right after all. The starting point was correct but the path was rockier than he thought. The actuality of mental training was a more complicated concept. These so-called mentalists had been chosen way back when they were a child for their outstanding mental and physical conditions. They were trained in a group of 10 each. They grew up together as they trained together to build the rapport. And they would become the true elite of combats!

Nevertheless, Ye Chong did not expect to get fully immersed in the boundless world of mentalist, neither did he wish the expertise could provide him aid of any kind during battle. He only wished that it could at least help him to ease his pain whenever that symptom came raiding him. If it could do that, it would be godly helpful and Ye Chong would be thanking God.

Other than the daily meditation session, there were other things to do as well. Ye Chong was not the meddling kids who would go digging some graves, peeling some masks, he had much better things to do like getting familiar with the Guardian. He had been restlessly trying to get along with this miniature mech the past few days because he understood the fact well enough that only with the continuous bonding between the pilot and the mech itself would bring out the best in each other. The Guardian was just like the treasure of infinity, which never failed to give Ye Chong new surprises.

Dagger for No.2. It was a rather stupid item name for a great pair of daggers like itself. It did not even look like a proper noun of naming without the capitalization, even though this silly name represented a transcendent pair of daggers. Numerous discussions were conducted between Ye Chong and Mu yet they failed to determine the concept behind the production of such kind of

dagger, which was mind-blowing enough for Ye Chong to praise how Gu Shaoze was a genius. The sharpness of Dagger for No.2 was much higher than the Blue Winter which the tip had been imbued with Do Kun stone. The one pity was... the fact that it was too small to do anything significant on a mech, unless the fatal spots were aimed at first or it would still be a mosquito's bite on an elephant. The other catch was it was tricky to pilot the miniature under the unique monochromatic vision, and Ye Chong was attempting to get used to it.

In addition, Ye Chong also had to invest a few hours of his day on getting some hands-on practices on the bones he got from the grandfather, just to prevent regression in his skills.

Judging by the routine he had day by day, sometimes Ye Chong wondered if he could even squeeze a few minutes on alchemy, which justified the fact that he was acting so patiently despite Lunatic Guan's consecutive absence, simply because he did not have the leisure to even figure it out! Out of the blue his life felt all fulfilling and meaningful. The biggest fortune of his life at the moment was probably Shang had switched places with Mu once again as his time was up. When Shang left and Mu came, it felt like a silent night, holy night - all was calm, all was bright.

This was exactly what Ye Chong thought especially being mentally tortured by Shang's lecture. Ever since he had a glance at Lunatic Guan he was as if overdosed with aphrodisiac. "Aphrodisiac?" The alien term to Ye Chong was then defined by Shang, claiming that it was a kind of chemical which would induce simulation of a certain kind of hormones in human body within a short period of time.

The definition sounded horrifying to Ye Chong, wondering when Shang did his chemistry studies. What left Ye Chong such a deep impression was actually how Shang was "reacting" towards Lunatic Guan after that. He would be praising Lunatic Guan solemnly and endlessly like her best worshipper, lines and lines of classic cheesy,

cringe-worthy expression of love he called them came rolling like inferno of his libido he said. It was impressive for he never repeat the said adjective or noun... but it was menacing at the same time. On top of that, regularly he would "advise", "recommend" or "suggest" Ye Chong to approach Lunatic Guan whenever he could, though the tone sounded like how a person who would also "advise" the old lady during a robbery. It was fortunate that Ye Chong had such a calm personality, he almost snapped under the uninterrupted chain of agony. One could imagine his machine jamming!

It was absolutely a horror! If anyone who acted like Shang after consuming this namely "aphrodisiac", then this said chemical would be the most fearsome drug in history of humankind!

The relieving fact was Shang had a strong accuracy of time as he gave away his space right at that moment, though with a heavy heart that made him sing some goosebumps-giving poems he said. Ye Chong gave a deep sigh of relief upon hearing Mu's monotonous line again.

Shang might had left, but Lunatic Guan had just arrived.

"HMMMMMMMMMMMMMM."

The glass hung in her right hand as Lunatic Guan leaned against the door with her face reddened from the alcohol. Ye Chong immediately paused his routine as he set his glance of indifference upon her.

"Yi...Yi...Ye." Her words were unclear, "Ye my boy you... you are so hiccup patient... so uncomplaining... I'm impressed... no wonder your master had such expe-expectation on you. Well... Very well... Let the good old sister grant your wish..." Her head swung uncontrollably as she fell upon the door and went all the way down to the ground she sat.

...? Ye Chong's expression suggested otherwise.

"Little Ye! You!" Glared at Ye Chong upon seeing his doubtful eyes, Lunatic Guan mumbled, "Ye my boy, don't tell me... you think I'm... I'm... hiccup drunk? Hmph... Let me tell you, Little Ye. I'm not... I'm not drunk! Let me give you a pro... proper lesson today!"

...

Settled down, Lunatic Guan pondered a little. Seriousness began surging through the drunken face of hers as her speech became clearer - a rare sight it was indeed. "The chemists, or some called the alchemists... they were not the one who played with the flasks right from the beginning, most of them happened to be botanist formerly. They researched on plants and had discovered a variety of attributes on these beautiful babies. Mhm, it's a very intriguing study indeed! However, as the timeframe for a plant to complete its growth was too long, it brought up a lot of problems for them to conduct the research effectively. Thus, these researchers, driven by their curiosity and impatience, started trying various methodologies to condense the growth timeframe of a plant. And that was how the chemists showed up. Until today, botany is still the most widely used field of study in alchemy."

Ye Chong was certainly all ears and surely he did not notice how the ever-drunken face of Lunatic Guan had turned all fair - her eyes were crystal-clear, lustered with wisdom as the features defined her shocking beauty with that gleaming face of hers.

"Then, people realized it was possible to reduce the growth timeframe through alchemy for living things other than the plants. As they ventured deeper into the unknown, their research was recognized. They started getting known by the people for being the explorer, the developer to new species. Then the field of alchemy was diversified, professionalized and began heading into the vision of humanity!"

Her tone was embedded with a hint of pride, which was surprising to Ye Chong for it was far-fetched to imagine a lunatic

like Guan could have such emotion... Perhaps, Lunatic Guan was not as simple as she appeared currently before... Ye Chong laughed at the thought - "like tell me anyone who had a simple background and managed to enter the Orbits!"

"So..." Lunatic Guan carried on, "there are a number of branches of studies in the alchemy. Well, we are humans after all. We can't simply involve ourselves in every field available. Other than the difference in branches of expertise, there are still many methods that are unknown to people to distinguish the grouping between chemists. Since you are technically my student, you should be aware of this. Mhm, everything regarding this is stored inside the processor at Room No.5 and the password would be 37254. Go check it out if you are interested. Being an occupation having rich history as dated long time ago, there are laws hidden within the field and rules which are unwritten to outsiders, which is something you need to work on. Or else... Heh! You could picture what would happen if you conduct the taboo, be it an accident or an incident. Hmph!" The tone fell coldly.

Ye Chong nodded, expressing his understanding.

"For starters, learn about botany. The research of botany is most fruitful and mature!" Lunatic Guan searched through her body for a moment, she found nothing as she stopped and pondered with her head tilted. "Oh, silly me!" she muttered as she withdrew a chip of size of a thumb right from her chest. "Grab!" She tossed it to Ye Chong.

Lunatic Guan "tossed" the chip too gently, the chip was too light to fly far enough to Ye Chong. It was falling and Ye Chong launched himself to grab it right before it hit the ground.

"Oh?" Lunatic Guan's eyes flashed slight peculiarity as her eyes scanned through Ye Chong, "Eh, my Little Ye, you ain't bad you know! I never knew you were quite capable of things despite that puny body of yours. Yes, yes, sister myself would be relieved even if you were to head out alone. Hehehehehehehe! Little Ye, you

know! You~could~always~come~to~me~ So I could have an actual test on your s-t-a-m-i-n-a! The exercises! If you know what I meant, hehehehehe!" sneered Lunatic Guan, covering her mouth which uttered a tone of ambiguous chemistry.

"Stamina?" Ye Chong shook his head as his reply came seriously, "My stamina is good enough. No test is required!"

...

Psh!

Lunatic Guan had lost control after trying very hard to inhibit her laughter, as she sat on the ground and burst out laughing. "Ahahahahahahaha!" The chain of laughter rang throughout the room. "Hehehehehehehehe!" Ye Chong could not compute the rationale behind this long laughter... "Mu." He knew it would be very inappropriate if he asked out loud, so he asked Mu in his mind instead, "Is my stamina that bad?"

"Hmm..." Hesitated Mu, "Probably the foe had better vitality, although the chances are less than 1%!"

"Hah..."

It took quite some time before Lunatic Guan lost her breath, as she tapped her chest, gasping for air. 3 minutes lapsed and she finally calmed down.

"Hah."

"Okay, this chip contains the illustrations of common herbs. Although most schools do not demand their students to memorize all of this, you are my student and you should not be all cheap and secondary of course! Memorize the entries, every-single-of-them. I'll be testing you in a few days. If you got it wrong, heh! No doubt, punishment awaits! And that would be very, very memorable to my Little Ye."

Ye Chong shuddered for some reason.

"Also!" she spoke on, "this is only a side quest, but you better be doing it. You would be collecting the actual herbs as samples based on the listing in the illustrations. Yes, the plant searching device would be at Room No.2, fifth from the left on the third row. You would probably need that. The instruction is there. It is simple, just a glance and you'll get it. So stop bothering me with that! Okay... that's probably... it? I want to see actual samples for all entries on the illustrations after 5 days. Alright, save the nagging. That's it." Lunatic Guan waved as she seemed a little irritated somehow.

"Tata! Zzz..."

She ignored Ye Chong after that. Lunatic Guan leaned against the door and began sleeping soundly.

Chapter 139: Into the Woods

Room No.2, fifth... from the left... the third...row... There it is!

So this is the plant searching device Lunatic Guan had mentioned? Wondered Ye Chong as he took a careful look around. It was unexpectedly tiny in size, with an appearance of a cube of about 5 to 6 cm³ with two levels where the upper part contained a piece of crystal spread in nets of pale yellow while the lower was a base of metallic dark blue which the texture had been glossing beautifully after the process of frosting. Both levels were connected by 2 composite straps at the endings with adjustable hinged pins on them, which looked like a futuristic watch from a glance.

Ye Chong took the pin and buckled himself by the wrist. Tick! Clipped the adjustable pin automatically on the wrist. The size was just right. No discomfort was felt on his wrist.

Zzzzt!

Almost immediately after, the device was activated as beams of various colors were diverged from the crystal and then converged upwards right above, which eventually formed a clear hologram on top.

Right inside the device there was a detailed manual that illustrated instructions required to operate the system. As Lunatic Guan had stated, it turned out to be indeed simple, easily understood. Technically, Ye Chong just had to insert the data of the designated plant into the chip to trigger a scanning system which would look for the inputted plant within the proximity of 10 meters. And the locations would be marked on the hologram. Thus, it would be justifiable to state that intellectualization had already occurred in all sorts of fields, including the study closest to the nature, the alchemy itself.

The chip given by Lunatic Guan had actually encompassed

entries of a large variety of plants, which turned out to be an eye-opener to Ye Chong, since plants were the rarest species he would see back on Trash Planet-12. So instead of plants, the mutated lifeform took the place of the bottommost of the food chain. They would consume organic junks for a living and they possessed great survivability. There were plants on the planet, however those were mostly the kinds which could adapt to harsh conditions, which in return, they had bland colors and unsightly appearance. Thus his reaction as he could have never seen such beautiful bushes of flowers on the hologram with different kinds of shapes and colors before.

To even survive on Trash Planet, the first lesson one has to learn is to respect life. The kinds of species still living on Trash Planet are absolutely strong and lasting by nature. Throughout the days of getting in between life and death, Ye Chong learned this lesson by heart. He valued life, he would treat lives of any form equally, and that would be Ye Chong's philosophy towards life.

Eventually these plants were like the masterpiece by the God to Ye Chong!

Ye Chong did not rush out of the room and began his plant sampling right away. Instead, he took a thorough reading on the description of the plants. Towards learning, he held sufficient patience, demand and curiosity, as he believed these were all parts of his strength while strength always had the ability to determine the outcome of his life, being the warranty to his survivability!

But then Ye Chong exited from the concentrated inquisitiveness of his pretty soon, simply because... "Man... memorizing is truly a tiring work..." In any event, Ye Chong had confidence in his memory being average at the very least before this. And today he stumbled upon this task that turned out unexpectedly tedious... where he barely remembered a thing on the list yet his brain felt all exhausted, getting dizzy.

Seems like... Mu would be more accustomed at tasks like this...

No.

Ye Chong still understood the difference of memorizing the listing by Mu or by himself, only the strength which was wholly his would be the most reliable source of guarantee!

It was a pretty comprehensive set of illustrations that it felt like a mini encyclopedia. There were extensive writings regarding the nature, the effect and even the actual application of the specified plant in the industry. Nonetheless, such vast amount of information remained a bit puzzling to a beginner like Ye Chong. Plainly the basic information of the plants alone was already a headache to him. He solely wished that Lunatic Guan's examination would come on a later date, as 5 days were challenging.

...

Ye Chong strolled through the woods.

Ugh. I forgot. Why had I never thought of borrowing a mech from Nan Nan's grandfather? I would have some sort of transportation at least! Ye Chong pitifully checked out the list of mechs he had with him... none of them were deployable, as either they were damaged beyond repair or they were too alarming to appear in the woods. Ye Chong could just imagine everyone on Haleyson hunting him down the moment the mech flipped out of the dimension.

Sigh... Ye Chong was in grief but what else could he do? He lifted his steps and began walking hurriedly, at least Ye Chong's stamina was certified to do a bit of running in the greens.

The forest was serene.

The atmosphere slowed his steps gradually.

Sauntering through the forest, he inhaled the refreshing air coming right from Mother Nature. Ye Chong sure had fallen in love with this sensation of serenity. Beep! Beep! Beep! The plant

searching device on his wrist pulled him back from the fantasy. The beeping of notification sounded extra ear-piercing in the silent woods. "Oh. Hah!" Ye Chong laughed uncontrollably, "My life has always been filled with danger and war. Such life of peace and harmony does not belong to me!"

He shifted his focus back onto the plant searching device on his wrist. Wow! He staggered upon seeing the countless red spots appeared in the interface!

"Ye." Mu's voice echoed, "You should try searching one item at a time. Currently you had inputted too many items!"

The device was unquestionably powerful, the overall efficiency of the sampling process was sharply increased after Ye Chong did as what Mu guided.

Okay, this is the Trifolium... What about this? Hm... Pairing Vine...? No... it should be Paired Whip...

Ye Chong began sampling the plants as instructed by the device while tasting the painful realization of his atrocious memory which hardly helped him recalling even the name of the plants he encountered.

He plucked a few plants and grabbed some others...

Soon, Ye Chong discovered a new issue - his hands were bare. He was unarmed. He did not bring any form of containers to keep the plants he had collected, which upset him... "Ah!" He also found out how fragile the plants were that they crumbled in his palms as Ye Chong carried them along. And he had to start from scratch again.

In the midst of his fret, a few clinking sounds of metal rang by his ears.

His pupils went focused as he perceived the incoming sound carefully. He might had an atrocious memory, but he still had a good pair of ears. "Was that..."

"Ye, there were two mechs warring..." Mu simply did not give

him the opportunity to flaunt his sensitive hearing, habitually his voice sounded monotonously, "Somewhere 500 meters from your right hand side. Mhm, the mech model, judging by the clinking, it should be one of the mechs we encountered at the sanctuary before, while the others... unknown."

"Sanctuary?" Ye Chong withdrew his hands from one sprout, he did not intend to join the party at first, but... he tilted his head pondering. The men from sanctuary, their intentions had been confirmed to be hostile. If that's the case, it would be beneficial in the upcoming encounters if we could get more information on them.

"Ye..." Somehow Mu could see what Ye Chong was thinking, as he suggested, "If you really insist on joining the party, piloting the Guardian would be the best option! The Guardian is in-built with an anti-detection system which could counter the detection by the mechs from the Sanctuary at a success rate of 85% and above. The landscape is rather fitting to the nature of Guardian too."

"Mhm, a great idea it is," agreed Ye Chong.

Ye Chong started to get the hang of unique monochromatic vision in the Guardian. The ever refreshing roaring strings of information somehow were able to get him into a status of calmness quickly. The boundaries defined by dots and lines in black and white, the ever-moving data, they were mesmerizing to Ye Chong. He grew fond of the Guardian as he got familiar with the interface.

Leap. Leap. Run. Leap.

The miniature mech worked like a charm in the woods since its size was mini as it was called. It felt weaving through the trees with more dexterity than a standard mech which stood 10 meters and above.

The only downside Ye Chong felt about Gu Shaoze's genius invention though... was the color itself. Well, certainly the color

gold was classy and glossy, easy to the eyes, but it was too eye-catching in Ye Chong's opinion. Ye Chong did not really fancy the all sparkling and dazzling color scheme on his mech when he was born being an assassin lurking in the dark. He did try repainting the surface of the Guardian with some darker colors like a grayish green, however contrary to his expectation, the material of the Guardian was more than peculiar as no paint seemed to be able to remain on the surface. Some types of the paint he tried would drip off in streams. There were paints that lasted on the surface with no question, till Ye Chong tried wiping them... and they got transferred to the cloth after that, like those washing powder advertisement he had seen before, the Guardian stayed clean as new in one wipe despite all sorts of paints and dirts.

Mu was pretty intrigued by the nature of the material on the surface yet sadly he could not perform any kind of effective analysis without the aid of professional apparatuses. So the material for the Guardian lingered as the biggest mystery till that moment.

Ye Chong who was piloti-nope, practically saying - Ye Chong who was wearing* the Guardian, moved like an agile beast in the forest as he went leaping and dashing freely at great speed!

The accuracy as well as the coverage of the detection system on most mechs would be negatively affected in the woods, except for a super mech like Mu Shang, which was extremely rare for mechs being able to perform accurate detecting and positioning even in the jungle. Back in the days where he was still performing NR Training and piloting a Raven, he always had a preference to fight people in the jungle as that would potentially reduce the differences in capacities of mechs with the foes.

The dense branches provided Ye Chong the best camouflage, as he made to the two mechs 30 meters away nearby without alerting them using the Guardian's impeccable anti-detection system.

Right when he deployed the Guardian, the analysis function that

ran automatically gave him a headache for a moment, countless networks of data flooded his eyes, the data ran and refreshed maniacally. He only realized the fact that the landscape was too complicated for Guardian to compute. He was jammed with the information and he could see silhouettes at the slightest. Nevertheless, the system seemed to have cleared up itself while he was puzzled by the issue. The imagery started simplifying itself as some lines faded away, the visual grew clearer, the data stream refreshed slower.

It was a shocker to Ye Chong to see the sudden changes all by the system itself but he did not have the time to figure it out just yet. Apparently there were still a lot of functions undiscovered... Speculated Ye Chong, who then calmed his excitement as he observed the images attentively.

As stated by Mu, the mech was indeed from the Sanctuary. Ye Chong could recognize that model at first glance, being similar to the one he knocked out with the Guardian back then, whereas the other mech... it was much smaller in size, had an emerald body, the designs were rather revitalizing, with slight innocence. Ye Chong suspected it being a mech for females.

The two mechs had apparently created an opening around them. Twigs were broken, trees collapsed in a circle of borderline. The earth was scooped out viciously. These had justified the fact that they must have fought before. The green mech had several scratches on the body too, while the Dawn mech, as expected from the Sanctuary, was bright anew. The status of both parties was blatant in this scenario.

Both parties stood still as they anticipated the next move of each other.

"Ey, kiddo!" The Dawn mech spoke, "Why don't you just be a good girl and follow me back to our Sanctuary? You aren't running away today. The Sanctuary had made a compulsory order to capture you alive. As long as you are still inside the Orbits, you

can't run. Just give up."

"Capture me alive? Hmph! Not this easy! Guess what! I'd rather die right here than returning to that freaking place!" The slightly kiddish voice rang in Ye Chong's ears with immense rebellion of anger along with desperation.

"You want to die? Providing that you do not spit your last breath here, the Sanctuary always has a way, even if you want to drop dead to hell, we would pull you all the way back from hell!" The words came harshly from the pilot on the Dawn mech. They sounded cold and inhumane.

"Heh! I understand I'm no match to your big and scary machine! But my life still lies in my own hand! Well, I'll die right here and drop dead to hell at most, what else could happen? In fact, hell feels like a better place to stay than that freaky place!" Determination filled the words of the female pilot on the green mech.

"Keep your chariot just yet, miss! The officials had stated to forsake your previous sins if you return now with obedience. You have their words." The pilot on the Dawn mech turned slow in his tone, seemed to be calming down the female pilot he had just enraged. Obviously he was worried, judging by the personality portrayed by the female pilot, it would not be weird to see his mission failed in the end. "Well, miss. You do know that you could never escape the Sanctuary. Just follow me, I'll guide you and I promise you that you will be fine." His words voiced gently like a peaceful elderly.

"Hmph!" Too bad it did not work on the girl as she ridiculed, "What a line, 'I promise you that you will be fine'? Hmph! You are nothing but a watchdog being ordered by your master to fetch a bone. What bark can you even promise?"

"Why you little..." The senseless words had infuriated the pilot on the Dawn mech, "You are a stubborn kid, aren't ya? Let's see

how I'm going to teach you something about manners! Don't tell me about your pointless suicide! You could shoot yourself in the head now, I'll just get a few 'whips' from my 'master' at most. But I'll make sure you would suffer enough before that!"

The threatening tone resounded through the peaceful forest, which turned chilly and disturbed.

Chapter 140: The Greenbird in Liberty

"So you are the kind who wouldn't bulge till doom is slapped right in your face eh? You might be the talent from the elite group, but well, too bad, too bad...", he spoke grimly, as the last sentence trailed off in shrills, of his firearm.

"You..." The girl was indeed a "kiddo" as labeled by the Dawn mech pilot. She apparently lacked experience in combats and reacted passively towards the sudden blow.

Ye Chong in the meantime decided to spectate the entire fight between the two parties at the side. He had once matched against the mechs from the Sanctuary before, but that was a team fight. It did not define the capabilities of the mech when alone, which was what Ye Chong strived to witness in the woods.

The dirty move pulled off by the pilot on the Dawn mech was fancied by Ye Chong. He would give an excellent score for the pilot was able to sneak an attack by distracting the foe with his words. An epitome of assassination to learn from! But Ye Chong knew his abilities well. With his personalities, it would be a little far-fetched to pull such trick off. He would be far more appropriate to sneak an attack in dark, without sound and without trace.

They exchanged moves rather quickly, since the space was limited and filled with numerous obstacles. Their distance of action was much shortened, thus the melee fights. Oh? Ye Chong was triggered by the word, "melee", that sounded like his arsenal!

The fight before came too abruptly. Ye Chong barely had the opportunity to do a close-up on most of the mechs involved, except for that purple mech.

Seemingly the Dawn mech had a distinctive 3 feet design, which gave it an improved balancing on the land, whereas the green mech looked bland in contrast. An oval cabin sat right above the 3 feet of the Dawn mech, where it was connected to a red disk with 3

pliable metallic tubes. Plenty of white spots of various sizes sparkled on the surface of red disk.

It looked odd indeed.

If Ye Chong stayed much longer in the Orbits, he would have known that the Dawn mech took the form of a kind of species exclusive to the place, the Tripeslug*.

The girl's green mech had obviously taken the form of a bird. The whole mech literally looked like a dainty green bird, which were much shorter than its opponent and it was hard to tell if it had anything outstanding about it. But then, Ye Chong was not foolish to judge the performance of a mech by its appearance. In fact, he had experienced the potency of the Dawn mech. Judging by the information obtained from the pilot, he seemed to be cautious with this "kiddo" he called.

The way the Dawn mech fought in close range was eccentric!

Snap! Two of the tubes connected to the disk were disengaged! Two red beams of light came out from the bottom and extended rapidly over the tubes in swirls!

Within twinkling of eyes, the pair of soft tubes had transformed into a pair of flaming electric whip. Buzz! Buzz! Electrical growl came from the whip occasionally along with a few arcs of light glaring in the eyes. And at the tip of both of the tubes a conical laser beam was installed.

Ye Chong was amazed by the ingenious design! The tubes clearly were made out of one-of-a-kind materials - highly pliable and durable, combining with the conical laser beams, they would have a certain level of penetrability. The choice of the tubes was great as they provided a more nimble action compared to most of the close-ranged weapons, due to the fact that it had the most intuitive changes of angle, hence becoming an unpredictable weapon to the foes. "Still, the downside... as usual..." Ye Chong could tell it at first glance, the whips were unpredictable alright, but it could not deal

fatal damages to the foes.

The other tube was also covered with flames and electricity while the red disk had become a shield which its angle could be changed naturally.

That was smart. However, Ye Chong could tell - melee attacks should not be the strength of the mechs from Sanctuary. They could be supportive but not aggressive! The statement was apparent when the choice of close-ranged weapons installed on the mech was concerned. It lacked a killer! It did not have any vicious close-ranged weapon! Hence it would not allow the mech to gain the ultimate advantage in a melee attack and it would be nothing in front of the Black Covers' mech which ached at melee attack on the other end of the scale.

The Dawn mech fought proactively, its speed caught Ye Chong's attention.

The Black Coves, the FMPPA, the Sanctuary... they might had an utterly different design of mechs with emphasis on a totally different aspect, but they had something strangely similar - all of them had superb speed. Consequently, speed remained as the core factor of mech combats, whether it did psychic attacks, a punch in the face or a missile launch with heat tracing.

Habitually the Guardian had activated its automatic analyzing system over the two mechs. The analysis ran like a whirlwind that a vast amount of information crashed the field like a wave of tsunami. Ye Chong's eyes were not in the mood for those. They were all on the fighting between the mechs.

The weaponry of the Dawn mech behaved exactly as Ye Chong predicted - the whips slitted oddly like serpents in the head, ever-changing and magnificently swift; the shield hovered around the body of the mech, highly prepared for incoming attacks.

The green mech seemed to be rather familiar with the battle style of the Dawn mech as she dodged the hurricane attacks with grace.

Yet, she did not manage to dodge everything. The mech was whipped a few times, charred linings remained on the surface. The machine was not broken however. Although the flaming electric whip might had a threatening appearance, it still had limited forces that it did not deliver any actual damage to her mech.

The girl wielded a parrying spear, an ordinary weapon which Ye Chong had once used before.

"Eh?" Ye Chong was so astonished that he could not help but to exclaim. Something was amiss! His eyes fixed on the green mech's behavior. I knew it! At first glance, the girl was at a worse situation in the fight, holding up attacks from the foe; however, Ye Chong saw it through - the girl was fine the whole time, her attacks were actually delivered viciously that it drove the foe in panic.

These were not surprising enough to make our hero gasp at the spot. There was a silhouette of another person in the cabin. And that was... "The purple girl who nearly killed me that day!"

No wonder there was always a sense of acted-upon-prediction in the battle... Ye Chong still could feel that pain dealing with that purple physic girl the other day! The girl piloting the green mech also gave an identical sensation to Ye Chong. She seemed to never fail to foresee the movements of the foe and avoid them in the nick of time, though she did not feel as skillful as the purple girl.

If the purple psychic girl symbolized a matured fledgling, the girl in the green mech would symbolize a nestling then.

Ye Chong was very much sure of his speculations by then. This had to be a technique unique to the mentalists in the Sanctuary, it could be learned! And from their conversation, he could tell that they were not measly of their kind.

Imagine a few tens of ... no! They would only need a few mechs with pilots who had acquired the technique, imagine them with their rapports... how terrifying the potency would be! Ye Chong was getting cold sweat over his back. One-on-one was not even a

confident fight to Ye Chong... let alone Two-on-one or more-than-two-on-one!

Ye Chong settled down as he collected his thoughts. He feared that the pilots who had mastered such technique would be the mastermind, the master strength of the Sanctuary! Well then! The girl in the green mech should not be a challenging opponent just yet! If he could obtain some top secrets of the Sanctuary from her, then it would be an immense help for him to identify the complicated factions in the Orbits. Moreover he would more likely to encounter her kind again in the near future. Assuming he could really dig some information beforehand, it could potentially save his life!

That tricycle mech was much worthless than the girl's head in his eyes.

This was it!

After a SWOT analysis in his head, Ye Chong made up his mind!

The three-dimensional illustration of the tricycle mech traced 4 white lines and 3 dots. Evidently those were the best spots to make fatal strikes after analysis. Ye Chong who had gotten pretty much used to the Guardian understood it well.

The jaguar peeked at its prey in the bushes, ready to pounce anytime!

...

"No," The girl in the green mech was holding the attacks laboriously. She knew that if she were to hold the attacks any longer, she would collapse before the damn watchdog. "But... But I..." She had lasted for this long yet she had hit her limit. The head was pounding as she overused her ability. "You should never overuse your physic ability! Never ever overuse your head! Preserve it more than any other parts of body!" The voice of her teacher echoed. The teacher had mentioned the precaution

numerous times before. Overusing the ability would be dangerous.

"But!" What else could she do?

"No! I'm not giving up! I'm not accepting this!" She could not accept failure just like this. "I had done so much just to get out of that place! I had been running endlessly for these days. It was suffering, very suffering, but it would not stop me from loving the vibrant world outside! I am not going back for the monotonous, repetitive routine of training-learning-training! If I am going back for those, I'd rather die! Right here!"

... Stand still, stand still! Use your head to stand still!

Good girl, now, see through my moves.

If you can't see it, you will just take every blow from me.

In her memory, her "home" had always been the base, a base illuminated by artificial lighting, no sun, no moon, only cold people freezing her surrounding, her soul.

She had been planning her grand escape in the dark 3 years ago and she realized how useful the knowledge she had learned in this. She started to work even harder in her studies, paying extra efforts to every teaching she received, soon she became outstanding in the group and caught the teacher's attention and admiration.

Finally, half a month ago, I grabbed the opportunity and I made it out.

As expected, the Sanctuary took action extremely quickly. But what she did not expect in her prediction was that the Sanctuary actually sent a group of men to hunt her down. "Apparently I am indeed outstanding enough for the Sanctuary to send an army for me." The irony ridiculed her as she laughed bitterly. The additional inclusion of army in her plan did not panic her, instead, she saw through the silver lining in the sky calmly, seized every lining she saw and escaped.

She cracked her head thinking every single moment of her life.

And she did it. The army slowly became a team, a team gradually became few men. Under her tenacity, only one foe had remained right before her.

Nevertheless, this situation was not what she desired, as she knew herself well, in a one-on-one, straight up it would be her defeat. It was not because of her poor performance of course. She might had yet complete the whole training course in the Sanctuary, but she was in fact the best of the elites. She had exceptional talent in this, compared to most of the pilots in the Sanctuary. It was depressing because her failure was solely because of the incapacibilities of her mech compared to the Dawn mech. The Greenbird was a mere training mech for the pilots in the Sanctuary, no doubt it would be feeble in front of the standard Dawn mech from the Sanctuary.

No... No!

Does that mean am I going to really die here? Today?

Depression filled her heart, desperation drowned her mind.

Her body stuck in a fight, her soul stuck in a contract.

Chapter 141: Little Girl

Ah?

The corners of her eyes discerned a bright silhouette suddenly flashing by. The little girl shuddered in her heart. Wham! She looked back on her mech, a few new scratches were added to the body of her wounded Viridae*! She shook her head and tapped her cheeks, being the topmost student for sight examination in her group, "How could I be seeing things?" she mumbled. "What was that?" She failed to identify it at first sight. It had to be the speed of the moving object being too fast and not because of how it travelled beyond her field of attention. "Yeah, certainly!" She was very much confident of herself.

Something must have changed! This was the first speculation that popped up in her thoughts. The current situation would only put her in worse fates as time went. At this rate, inevitably she would be caught in the end! Well since she had gotten the worst situation, any changes would be a variable, a spark of hope for her to take hold of! Variables were exactly what the little girl desperately wished for!

At such perilous moment, yet she was as calm as the sea with her thoughts wondering. If both Mu and Ye Chong were aware of her thoughts, they would be pretty impressed too.

Still, a variable is a variable and this variable went beyond her calculation!

She wanted to act on something but...

Out of the blue, the Dawn mech was stoned as his hurricane attack stopped abruptly. It stood like a sculpture in the woods, an absolute activity to an absolute inactivity... which the girl could not react in time to. "Huh?" The girl was astounded, her eyes caught a few beams of pale green slashing through the bottom of the oval cabin of the Dawn mech.

?

Wait! Oh no...

Her face drained completely as she mumbled her fright, pulling her mech away from the Dawn mech, but she was too late! The Dawn mech exploded and the impact had shattered the balance of her mech. The Viridae lost control as it fell rolling like a giant boulder off the slope. The scene went spinning and her head was struck by concussion. Dizziness blanked her head, confusion seized her.

They were fighting in an opening of the woods. And the explosion directly caused a shallow dent of a diameter about 10 meter on the ground. The sound of branches breaking down and trees crashing rang throughout the forest. The trees were literally shredded, only the trunk was remained in messy cuts.

...

Ow... Oh...

She shook her heavy head, trying her best to get back into the scene. Her eyes blinked vigorously as the imagery grew clearer gradually. There was... There was a gold silhouette standing there... he seemed to be looking... at me?

She shook her head again. Her sight recovered fully and finally she identified what the gold silhouette was exactly. A mech...Mi-Miniature...mech? She could not believe her eyes. She was skeptical of what she saw, judging by the appearance and the sizing, it was a miniature mech indeed. But... was there a miniature mech this potent? That it could eliminate a Dawn mech by few slashes in dark? And that was a one hit kill too!

"No... No way. Absolutely, no way!" she muttered in disbelief, shaking her head. How could this be possible? She had been instilled with the ideology that the Sanctuary was invulnerable, unbeatable and was definitely the strongest. Even if the Sanctuary

was put in comparison with the nemesis - the FMPA and the Black Coves, the Sanctuary would only be on par with them, and they could not simply destroy a Dawn mech's armor by a few slashes.

A miniature mech? Breaking a Dawn mech with cuts? This is too ridiculous! The capacity of a miniature mech was incomparable even to a standard mech in the market! Its sole purpose was to act as a personal guard. And I had never heard of ridiculous stories about a miniature mech overcoming a standard mech, especially a Dawn mech itself! No way. Impossible. Unmöglich! There had to be someone else dealing the fatal blows, not this mech alone, I must have missed it!

But who was it? She took a look around, there was nobody else!

Ye Chong did not look down on the Guardian though. Unlike the others, he recognized the power of the Guardian right from the beginning so he had subconsciously categorized it as a Super Mech. He had never thought about how others who had yet witnessed the potency of his mech would react at first sight. Nonetheless, even if the others did not feel alarmed while seeing the Guardian right in front of them, he would be much happier, since that simply meant that the Guardian would be easily-overlooked and he would have better odds on successful assassinations.

He stared at the green mech collapsed on the ground silently, awaiting it to get up. Despite that... he waited patiently. He waited very patiently. He waited very, very patiently. The person did not seem to have moved a gear. Ye Chong frowned in his mech. Was the person so feeble that she fainted even on such a weak blow?

The golden mask on his face expressed his frowning vibrantly. Well, of course, the tiny bits of changes on expression did not escape the little girl's certified, topmost assured sight.

So it really was him? Muttered the little girl in her mind.

"Get out!" Ye Chong had lost his patience, he began counting down, disregarding time given her to ponder, "10 seconds. Get out

yourself or I'll do it for you." His words fell indifferently. No temper was in, as if the threatening was done like his usual dough-kneading.

Huh? Wait, um, no!

She panicked. Her sensible mind suggested her that it was in fact this golden man who destroyed the Dawn mech. The flat tone contained an indestructible confidence, which made her reassessed the ordinary-looking miniature mech in front of her.

10.

9.

Ye Chong did not expect the person's mind to be this sensible as he counted down nonchalantly.

8.

7.

The 10 seconds lapsed like milliseconds to a person in panic of sudden changes.

3.

2...

Ye Chong's voice was flat as always it was.

Wait!!!

To her horror, she found out how her pointless ponder had taken up too much time, the word quickly escaped her mouth, pleading for mercy.

T-1 before Ye Chong was launched.

Her face was pale; paler than the skeletons, as she saw the man in the miniature mech being still unconcerned despite his words. There were no changes on his expression at the slightest! She felt chilliness sent down to her marrows. A true fright to the spines!

In that mere second, the atmosphere mutated! Fear stormed the

place. The tension... she had only tasted it once from the teacher who taught killing back in the Sanctuary.

"Your senses are much more sensible than most of the people, even more sensible than myself," commented their teacher. "Whenever you feel a sensation similar to mine of someone's, you've got to be careful. Never mess with such kind, understand?" The teacher's eyes gazed at her and her mates like a serpent in hunt. The gaze frightened the entire group.

And the tension exerted by the teacher was much stronger in this person!

I am doomed...

1.

Ye Chong did not even bother with her plight, his body moved as soon as he finished counting.

The golden man shrouded like a wind right towards her. Her face was fully drained, as she realized there was no way she could grasp the man at this speed. "Is this ... Is this a human?"

Thup. A dead silence came next.

Crack.

Clink!

Crack Crack.

Crack! A few seconds later, the sound came last.

It felt like a thunder in her ears as in great terror she discovered her cabin shaking. The armor right in front of her was cracking, the lines spread like a spider web. The last sound of cracking was the sound made when the piece of armor fell.

Clink, clank. Klank, klink, shush! The pieces of armor rained before her. The fresh air surging in teased her suffocated mind. She felt pleasant and her nerves were serene. Yikes! Through the gap she could see the golden man staring at her expressionlessly.

The eyes of solely black-and-white were freaking her out for some reason. Goosebumps occupied every inch of her skin.

Ye Chong planned to use his poorly-named dagger at first. But Dagger for No.2 was a bit too much for cracking the armor. A slight cut on the pilot inside could have been fatal and definitely he did not intend to do that. He wanted not her body, but her head for the information he desired. "Oh well." He went ahead with his fists instead. He did smash an alloy door open before but that blow wounded his fist. Thanks to the Guardian, its capability magnified his strength, so smashing the armor of Viridae open felt like a smashing plastic. His hands were covered by the Guardian, so there were no injuries as well.

Of course, it was not exactly due to the capability of the Guardian. It was also because of the materials used to build Viridae. Viridae was purely a mech for training purposes, one could imagine its material would be as brittle as plastic among the other great materials for Dawn mechs. Such a normal material, no doubt Ye Chong could break it even with his own fist. But if it was a Dawn mech, it would be a dream to even crack the armor with bare hands.

She crawled out of the mech with initiative. Seeing how the foe had behaved, it would be better for her to compromise and act along, just to guarantee her survivability... What if it enrages the foe? Any form of disobedience would be assumed as provocation for sure. And anyone could imagine what could possibly happen if the foe assumed you being disobedient. She would not want to lose her life over such foolish act.

The monochromatic sight of the Guardian was pretty bad at deciphering human's facial features. In Ye Chong's eyes, the girl looked like a three-dimensional avatar formed in white lines and shades of grids. It was strange, at least the lines were clear enough to roughly define the appearance of the girl.

The girl was as little as she sounded, about 13 to 14 years old. A

shaggy short hair, a hollow face. She was in fact little thinner than average girls. She looked exhausted yet her eyes were lustrous. Well those were never Ye Chong's concern. "Mhm, good physique." He carried on looking, the muscles were of well-proportions and could be explosive at times. Obviously he could tell how the girl had undergone systematic training. Judging by the age and the rate of puberty of the girl - high score for the training course! And he was well-aware that this girl knew an important training course, yes, that technique unknown to Ye Chong where he got it from Mr. Yin. Mentalist would only teach to another mentalist. The training methodology was one to one, only the emphasis could be different. But they are commonly known to be time-consuming.

Under such a constraint of time yet she was able to achieve such a physique, impressive!

If Shang was here, he would probably begin to recite poetries about the beauty of the girl as he launched another round of commentary of the beauty. Too bad it was still a puzzling issue to Ye Chong to compute.

He stood before the little girl. "Wh-" He realized how the WH-question could be actually technical to initiate a meaningful conversation. Suddenly he did not know how he should begin.

"Mu... Mu!" muttered Ye Chong in his mind, the Orbits calling Mu, the Orbits calling Mu, "Why don't you do the inquiry instead?"

"I am no expert in this," Mu rejected the offer right away. "If you are indeed in need of assistance, I could call Shang for this, since he is considered more of the expert in this!"

"Shang?" He thought back the passionate lectures of tortures he received these few days from Shang, "Ne-Nevermind." He shook his head violently, "I'll do it myself."

Hmmm...

Settled down, Ye Chong pondered of which WH-question to start

with.

The little girl was in shock at first, but she calmed herself over the time as she saw the miniature mech man stayed already silent for a long time. The heck he wants? Mumbled the girl.

"Your name?" The words broke the awkward silence.

She was alarmed and then she reacted calmly, part of the outcome of her training came flawlessly, "Zhu Ling."

"Zhu Lin?"

"Ling. With the 'g' at the end."

"Oh I see!" Ye Chong did not have any concept on surnames, since name was merely a code for someone to address yourself at convenience.

"Position at the Sanctuary?" he asked.

"Sanctuary?" I knew it! She got the purpose of this man right away. She had pinpointed the part of her sought by this person. That means I still have something to bargain with. As long as I get this right, then my situation would be dramatically improved!

Various plans ran through her head, her lips did not stop moving though, "I am the member of the elite group in the Sanctuary!" She understood the current situation disallowed her to act hesitated. Gaining trust from the person would be her top priority.

"Elite group?" Ye Chong had no idea what group that was.

"Well, elite group is an informal way to address for the insiders." Judging by Ye Chong's expression, she concluded that he knew nothing about the Sanctuary as she began explaining with patience, "The formal and official name of the group is known as the Sanctuary Executive Training group, which in simpler terms mean the group for the trainees who have yet completed their training as well as their assessment. They are under the Executives."

"Executives?" Another term first came to Ye Chong's ears.

"Mentalist Executives!"

"What are 'Mentalist Executives'?"

"Mentalist Executives are the internal bureaucracy formed by the advanced mentalist-pilots, mostly for fulfilling special mission or tasks with high difficulties." Pride was heard in her words as she said it with grace.

"I see! So they are all the expert pilots of the mentalist as you said?"

"Yes."

"And they are the ones with psychic ability?"

"Psychic ability?" The girl was confused, "The proper way to call it should be the 'extrasensory' of the body. It is a kind of application of mentality. And the mentalists are better experts in this compared to mentalist-pilot. It's just that the mentalist-pilots have in-depth understanding of combats. So they are aware of how to utilize such ability at maximum."

"Mhm, application is more of the key," Ye Chong utterly agreed to this statement. "So you are a mentalist... or a mentalist pilot?"

"Me? I... I have not passed the assessment so I can't be a mentalist-pilot just yet," her words sounded flat.

"So how many mentalist-pilots are there in the Sanctuary? How about the mentalists alone?" This would be the key question of the entire conversation. At least it would provide Ye Chong something to picture about the Sanctuary's forces.

"Abou-" She wanted to reply but Mu's voice hurried by Ye Chong's mind, "Ye, a mech is approaching here! And it's coming fast!"

Chapter 142: Lifted Throughout the Journey

Ye Chong felt a weight drop inside him. "How many?"

"Ten!" Mu's answer was a shock to Ye Chong. Ten mechs, the standard combat squad from the Sanctuary. Ye Chong was not too conceited as to believe that he could manage all ten of them single-handedly.

Zhu Ling was about to speak of what she knew when a golden figure flashed past, and by the time she realized what happened, she found herself lifted, moving quickly through the woods.

Zhu Ling was unable to open her eyes as she could hear the wind swishing past her, the headwind painful against her face. The occasional branch struck her body, delivering fiery pain that ensued. Nevertheless, she endured, and while it was quite painful, she did not even whisper a groan.

"30 degrees to the left!" Mu had chosen the best escape route for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong abruptly turned. Blood rushed to Zhu Ling's head from the centrifugal force produced from this sudden change in direction. Her vision darkened, and Zhu Ling finally let out a moan. Fortunately, Zhu Ling had always trained hard with her physique in excellent condition. She momentarily recovered, though amazed by what happened. From the pain of the wind brushing past her face, she could roughly make out the speed of the gold mech; the conclusion she derived from this surprised and even frightened her.

The gold mech's speed was way faster than an average mech's speed! How was that possible? Her mind was all jumbled up, the facts confronting her all defying everyday knowledge. Earlier, she even noticed a small detail - the mech's turning radius was very small, and this would burden the mech pilot heavily, just like how she was temporarily in shock from the blood rushing to her head.

However, the mech's pilot had made the turn like a normal maneuver - just what kind of monster was he?

Deep in her thoughts, there was another sudden turn, and Zhu Ling's vision darkened again, and her mind emptied!

She did not expect this to be just the beginning of an insufferable experience. The miniature mech made a series of impossible quick turns. Zhu Ling felt like she was swinging in Hell's playground, rising and falling, to the left and to the right. She could hardly afford to groan, and her remaining instincts told her to endure with all her might.

Ye Chong did not notice Zhu Ling's condition, it was lifted as she was in his hands. He was now entirely focused with Mu and the scenery before him. He needed to respond accurately and quickly to Mu's instructions, as the woods were littered with obstacles - it was no easy task to move so rapidly through the woods, and even with Ye Chong's commendable skills as a mech pilot, he dared not be careless.

The forest stretched far and wide, an unending sight of trees to the horizon. This provided ample space for Ye Chong to move.

Under Mu's instructions, Ye Chong managed to avoid the Sanctuary's standard combat squad as it headed towards the scene of the incident.

Just as Ye Chong was about to relax, Mu's words made Ye Chong ran again like a beast in heat, "Ye, don't stop, they're following your tracks towards you. Hmm, be careful, there are three mechs keeping watch in the sky!"

Unlike normal mechs that move with their engines, Guardian's strength came from the pilot's own strength, with amplification. Hence, Ye Chong did not fly, but ran and leaped as he made his way forward. Through Guardian's amplification of Ye Chong's already superior strength, every step onto the ground brought soil flying into the air, creating a hole in the ground - his trail was

marked distinctly like plowed soil. This left an easy sign for the enemy to track him.

Poor Zhu Ling. If the previous journey was unforgettable to her, the next journey was like a living hell! More speed, more impossible turns and a bumpier ride, all made her nearly lost her mind. The stress was already more than her body could take, and she had quickly fallen into a semi-conscious state.

The trees in the forest were humongous, nearly obliterating the view of the sky. Ye Chong stuck close to the ground as he charged forward, as his movements completely hidden from the skies.

Unlike Ye Chong's desperate run forward, the seven Dawn mechs advanced carefully, as though anticipating an ambush. The squad leader in the center looked even more sombre than the rest. From the marks on the ground, it was obviously not a normal mech, its size probably similar to a human's. This reminded him of the Sanctuary's earlier announcement of an important fugitive, one armed with a gold miniature mech. It was similar to the current target at hand.

He immediately reported this to the Sanctuary. "For a traitor to side with an enemy ..." The thought was unsettling.

From the latest intel report by the Sanctuary, the gold miniature mech had surprisingly powerful combat abilities. In the intel report, it was even advised for anyone facing the mech alone to seek help! For the veteran squad leader, this smelt like danger. It also meant that, in a one-on-one battle, the Sanctuary was not confident of victory.

This was why as Ye Chong went full speed ahead, the seven mechs behind him followed cautiously, fearing of an ambush.

Ye Chong moved among the trees like an enchanted golden bullet.

Suddenly, the view in front of Ye Chong lit up - he had left the

forest. He was greeted with a wide river, which he leaped into without hesitation.

Just moments after Ye Chong jumped into the river, a large group of Dawn mechs swished past the river's surface and entered the forest.

Further downstream, on a secluded shore of pebbles, a golden figure suddenly rose from the waters, a girl lifted in its hands, unconscious.

This was Ye Chong, emerging from his little dive. With Guardian's protection, Ye Chong moved like a fish underwater, unlike his previous humiliating experience.

Ye Chong put down Zhu Ling from his grasp, as she landed gently on the pebbly shore. After the desperate run through the forest, at such high speeds, any branch hitting her inevitably left a rip on her clothing. After all the running, her clothes were now in tatters, and that dip in the river left her nearly naked. Zhu Ling received strict training since she was young, and her physique had matured early, with a perfect body shape. This exposed view of her would have riled up most men.

Ye Chong was unmoved by the beautiful sight. It was not that Ye Chong lacked any masculine instincts, but Ye Chong knew next to nothing about these things. The only experience he had was only that one lick of Rui Bing. Besides, in Ye Chong's eyes, Zhu Ling was but a 3D image composed of a jumble of white lines, along with some relevant data on the side by Guardian. Under these circumstances, the only way Ye Chong could be moved was if he had reached Shang's level of appreciation!

"Hmm?" Mu exclaimed in surprise, unusual for his calm self.

"What is it? Mu!" Ye Chong asked curiously, since not many things could surprise Mu.

"Look at that necklace on her neck!"

"Hmm, what's wrong with that? It looks normal!" Ye Chong had no experience on women's jewelry such as necklaces, but he still went to have a look.

Hung from an ancient-looking string was a pendant shaped like a water droplet. The pendant was an opaque gray, which was not very impressionable. Of course, Ye Chong only saw its 3D grid image.

"Is it a dimension keystone?" Ye Chong's first guess was a dimension keystone, since many were made like pendants or ornaments, just like Mu's.

"No!" Mu rejected Ye Chong's idea decisively, and revealed the truth, "Based on available information, that droplet shaped pendant is made of a very rare material commonly known as Red Liquor. Red Liquor looked plain under normal circumstances, but when exposed to alcohol, it would turn a vivid red, and it was very popular among the ladies. However, it is very rare, and so, highly precious. If my information is correct, only some of the very ancient aristocratic families have these jewels!"

"Do you mean that the girl's background is suspicious?" Ye Chong's reaction was almost immediate.

"No, the term 'suspicious' feels too much like a subjective opinion! It's not recommended! I merely believe that this person's background has a high probability of being unusual!" Mu's calculating words felt almost devoid of emotions.

"Hmm, it's certainly possible, but her background has got nothing to do with us! Hmm, Mu, can Red Liquor enhance the properties of metallic materials?" Ye Chong asked. This was something he was interested in.

"There is no information on that as of yet! After all, it's a rare material, no one would experiment on it." Mu replied.

"Hmm, then we gotta experiment!" Ye Chong cocked his head to

the side, considering the idea.

Ye Chong stooped down and took the droplet shaped Red Liquor from Zhu Ling, without any sense of guilt. To him, Zhu Ling was his prey, and anything the prey owned was now naturally his! Deep inside, Ye Chong still believed in the ways of nature.

The young lady slowly awakened, and the contents of her stomach immediately started protesting like a storm. She lurched forward and vomited for a long moment.

When they entered the river, the semi-conscious young lady was instantly awakened, and found herself underwater. She did not panic, since surviving underwater for long periods of time was part of her training.

It was far more comfortable in the water, at least when compared to the insanely rapid turns on the ground. Slowly, she realized that the mech had no intention of surfacing to breathe! While she was considered excellent in this particular kind of training, that did not mean that she could stay underwater indefinitely. Out of alternatives, she forced herself into a faked state of death.

On the shores, with stimulation of fresh air, she slowly awakened, and upon returning to consciousness, found her the contents of her stomach raging like a storm. She could not help but throw up violently, unaware of her missing necklace.

After throwing up, she finally calmed down, and Zhu Ling finally noticed that her clothing could not longer fully cover herself. The young woman was, however, unembarrassed, and acted with her usual calm.

"Alright, you can continue with your questions! But let me leave after that!" The young woman spoke calmly.

Ye Chong was impressed, but did not show it as he spoke, "Hmm, alright, then let's continue the question earlier. How many mentalists and mentalist pilots are there in the Sanctuary?"

Chapter 143: A Sudden Thought

Ye Chong walked home by himself, his mind still preoccupied with the intel he obtained from the young lady earlier. He had imagined the Sanctuary to be powerful, but did not expect it to as powerful as he now knew. No wonder it could hold itself against Black Cove and the MPA! The Sanctuary's power came from its mentalists and mentalist pilots, and this made Black Cove and the MPA wary of it.

Black Cove, MPA and Sanctuary - Ye Chong considered the Three Forces, interrelated to but independent from one another. The Three Forces had many similarities, such as mech technologies that far exceeded that of the Five Galaxies, and their total mystery, as if they came from a different, powerful and mysterious world.

As for that young woman called Zhu Ling, Ye Chong let her go in the end! While killing her was easy, Ye Chong did not really feel like killing her. He did not enjoy killing, and he had only killed others for survival. If it was not necessary, why should he kill another person? Beside, he was quite impressed by the young woman - calm, rational, and persevering, Ye Chong saw traces of himself in her!

The young woman left with a calm expression, as though she had expected to be released. After some rest, the young woman showed remarkable physical capabilities, her movements athletic, as she gradually vanished out of Ye Chong's sight. Looking out to the empty shore of pebbles, Ye Chong could not help but sigh a little. To survive was rarely a simple task! That precious Red Liquor sat quietly in Ye Chong's bag.

Back at Lunatic Guan's place, Ye Chong realized that he had returned empty handed from his trip outdoors today, and smiled wryly.

Inside the house, Lunatic Guan was in a rare state of sobriety,

packing her things energetically. Lunatic Guan saw Ye Chong and called to him, "Little Ye, did you see my light yellow jacket?"

"Light yellow?" Ye Chong cocked his head to its side and thought for a moment. "It's been probably thrown out!" He was cleaning up that day, and had gotten rid of a mountain of things. Ye Chong could not recall if a light yellow jacket was one of them. However, since it could not be found, the probability of it being thrown away was high!

"What? Thrown out?" Lunatic Guan's expression froze, and immediately turned into great anger, "How dare you throw it out! Didn't you know I'm still going to wear it? Didn't you know ..."

"I didn't!" Ye Chong replied calmly but clearly.

Lunatic Guan was instantly silenced, and remembered then that she had asked him to clean up the house without giving any specifications. Lunatic Guan calmed down a little and humphed coldly, "I'll let you off this time, next time ask me before you throw anything out, don't just throw anything away!"

"Okay!" Ye Chong replied plainly.

"I'm going out these two days, so you stay in the house. Hmm, I've prepared some course material for you in Room Seven's photon processor, with detailed requirements. You'll do a test when I'm back, and if you fail, hehe ..." Lunatic Guan was obviously still holding grudge towards Ye Chong's role in her lost jacket, and her tone was unpleasant.

Ye Chong was like a rock, unmoved by Lunatic Guan's tone, and replied flatly, "Okay!"

"Hmph!" Lunatic Guan gave another cold humph and continued packing.

Ye Chong gathered from experience that Lunatic Guan would periodically make a long trip outdoors. During his time at Nan Nan's house, whenever this happened, Ye Chong would have to

visit earlier to retrieve the strengthening chemicals. Thus, while Ye Chong did not know where she was going, he was still not surprised at the trip.

Lunatic Guan hastily left, and Ye Chong was left alone in the house. Ye Chong enjoyed the peace. There were not too much of Lunatic Guan's prepared materials to study, and Ye Chong mastered them all in only a few days, and spent another two days collecting plant specimens. Ye Chong now had his time to himself with his tasks completed.

Ye Chong thought of the day he worried about not having a mech for transport, and had a sudden thought - perhaps he can try making a full-skeleton mech. Once the thought occurred to him, Ye Chong could not stop thinking about it.

The thought was too enticing!

For one, he had no suitable mech to use in the open that would not expose his identity. If his life was threatened, he would be defenseless! Hence, he desperately needed a mech, but the average mechs vendored in shops could no longer satisfy him.

On the other hand, this would also be a comprehensive test of all his knowledge and skills!

Ye Chong was decisive, and after affirming his choice, immediately went to the old man's place. After all, the materials would have to come from him.

The old man listened to Ye Chong's plain statement of his decision through slit eyes, and spoke after a moments' thought, "Come with me!"

The old man brought Ye Chong to a room in the underground workshop where he usually rested. This was the first time Ye Chong entered the old man's resting area. The room was not spacious, with only a bed and a table. There were some daily appliances in the corner of the room, and in another corner were

some tools.

The old man walked to that corner to activate some concealed mechanism, and the wall behind Ye Chong slid quietly to the side. Ye Chong was a little surprised to find a secret room in here, but his expression was as inert as a stubborn rock.

Seeing Ye Chong's calm expression, the old man's eyes gleamed softly with pride.

The two entered the secret room. Skeletons - the entire secret room was full of skeletons! However, compared to the mountain pile of skeletons outside, these skeleton materials in the secret room were few, numbering only a few dozen. Nonetheless, Ye Chong knew immediately that these skeletons were of higher quality than the ones outside, and some were even extremely rare materials. These skeletons were undoubtedly like treasure to a skeleton carver!

No skeleton carver would be unmoved by the variety and quality of skeleton materials kept in here. At least Ye Chong was so, his expression changing for the first time as he looked at these skeletons!

"Heavens! These skeletons are amazing!" Ye Chong thought as his eyes glowed, scanning through the materials!

The old man was pleased with Ye Chong's expression, and explained with some delight, "Every year, the Sanctuary would send some rare skeletons to me as a gift. I've kept them all this while, all for the sake of making a full-skeleton mech one day. Sigh, I'm old now, nothing like you young people! I have been stuck for a while now with my skills, there's no hope left for me in this lifetime. It's up to you now!" The old man spoke with some helplessness, his age more obvious than ever.

Ye Chong could not help but sober up from his enthusiasm.

The old man then spoke seriously, "I was going to pass on these

materials to you when your skills were fully matured, but this thought of yours came earlier than I expected. As your master, I have nothing else to teach you, your accomplishments are by your own efforts, and even I have learnt much from you. Take these materials with you. You're careful in nature, these materials will not be wasted in your hands!"

The old man's words were sincere, and Ye Chong was touched. He gathered himself with some difficulty and managed to reply with a calm tone, "Thank you, Master!"

With the old man's help, Ye Chong did not have to worry about materials. Initially, Ye Chong was only thinking of just making a mech of passable quality, but he did not expect the old man to provide his treasured skeletons accumulated over the years. Faced with these quality chosen skeletons materials, his initial thoughts were now abandoned, and his only intention now was not only to make a full-skeleton mech, but a top class one at that. Ye Chong even had a name ready for it - Han Jia. Of course, the name did not have any special meaning, since it was derived by Mu through a random selection algorithm. Ye Chong did not care to waste effort in this aspect. Thus, the name was decided.

The first challenge was the mech's main body design. The mech was designed for Ye Chong's personal use, hence it was inevitably a close range mech. Speaking of close range mechs, among all the ones that Ye Chong had encountered, the strongest would be Black Cove's mechs. Black Cove's mechs were the undisputed king of close range mechs.

However, it was not practical to model completely after Black Cove. While Ye Chong had spent some time at Black Cove, he had only ever played around with the F-58's structure, and not any other Black Cove mechs. The F-58 was only used for training in Black Cove, and far inferior to the Black Cove war mechs. Besides, here on the Orbits, the Sanctuary's men were everywhere, and they were familiar with the style of Black Cove's mechs. He would

only be targeted by the Sanctuary if he flew a mech like that outside.

Seemed that he would have to come up with something himself!

As for the engine, Ye Chong planned to remove Yu Di's engine. While Yu Di's engine was far inferior to Mu's, it still managed to hold its ground when going against the MPA's mechs. This was good enough for Ye Chong! Due to the engine's capabilities, it could not be made entirely of skeletons. Only certain key parts of it, such as the padding, could be made of skeletons to enhance its capabilities. Besides, designing the engine was more complicated and detailed than designing the mech itself, and Ye Chong was not certain if his own engine design would be better than the work of Fred the Great.

"Best to use what I have, and add some skeleton components to modify it a bit," Ye Chong deliberated.

Chapter 144: Han Jia

A mech's most important part were its engine and photon processor. The engine's problem was dealt with, but Ye Chong knew nothing of photon processors. Fortunately, he did not rely heavily on them, and a simple photon processor bought from the streets was enough to satisfy him.

Besides the photon processor and engine, other components such as scanning systems were not things that Ye Chong could make himself. Scanning systems found in the market were probably not up to par, and effectively useless against mechs from Black Cove, the Sanctuary and the like. However, Ye Chong did not plan to install a scanning system. As long as he had Mu, who had the most advanced scanning system, all he needed was a device that could link to Mu via photon processor. This was not too hard for him.

However, these was all work in later stages. For now, Ye Chong must understand which materials he had for disposal. This was unique to full-skeleton mechs - they were designed based on available materials, unlike the usual method of finding materials based on the design.

Rare skeletons were often chanced upon, and so the method of choosing the right materials based on design was impractical in the process of making a full-skeleton mech. Even when using the same type of skeletons, the quality would differ, since factors such as the animal's age and living environment would greatly affect the skeletons' density, strength and other properties.

Looking at the myriad of rare skeletons laid on the ground before him, Ye Chong was suddenly struck with much anticipation. What kind of mech would he come up with?

As he familiarized himself with all the skeletons, Ye Chong began to design the mech. With Mu's assistance, this process did not take too long. He also prepared a few backup schemes in case he

mishandled some skeletons by accident. However, Ye Chong hoped that they would not be needed in the end.

After that, he set to work!

The early processes were mundane. Crude processing of the skeletons demanded patience. No one had ever single-handedly produced a full-skeleton mech, and Ye Chong did not expect the heavy workload. Fortunately, Ye Chong was physically well prepared. Ye Chong worked like a tireless machine, continuing on and on.

Ye Chong's went through every step with great care, since most of those skeletons were unique, and if damaged, could only be replaced by another different one. If the replacement was in any way different to the original intended skeleton, it would reduce the overall performance of the mech. That was something Ye Chong hoped to avoid.

Every day, Hei Zi would send food to Ye Chong, but never interrupting him. Even little Nan Nan was sensible enough to not keep pestering her elder brother to play.

For an entire month, Ye Chong worked in an insane but peaceful condition. Even when it was Shang's turn to come outside, the mech knew that bothering Ye Chong would have dreadful consequences. Hence, the mech made the rational choice of keeping quiet.

Ye Chong stared longingly at the mech.

He admired the result of his month-and-a-half of hard work, and felt a great sense of accomplishment bubbling in him. This was definitely a masterful work, an impressive work! Ye Chong was most thankful for the fact that he did not damage a single skeleton in the whole process.

The mech stood at 12 meters tall, its main body made of giant whale's vertebrae and titan scarab's exoskeleton, shaped like a

human. Ye Chong loved Yu Di's four-armed design, since it could effectively make use of his impressive hand speed. However, Yu Di's four-armed design was too out of the ordinary, and would leave a strong impression in anyone who had seen it. The Sanctuary was still searching for Yu Di. If he made a similar four-armed mech, would that not invite trouble?

Ye Chong worked around it. He thought of the Dawn mech's two electric whips, and then of the four semi-crystallised thousand-segment worms among the skeletons the old man had given him. Ye Chong used those, but the inner photon circuits took him much effort to set up. The thousand-segment worms could not be made into electric whips, so Ye Chong attached bone spikes at the ends instead. These spikes were from the beater-eater's back, and were quite tough. Ye Chong had punctured high-strength alloy boards with them. Besides that, the spikes were resilient, and did not break easily from bending. Ye Chong spent much time whetting the spikes, exhausting one whetting machine for each spike, a sign of the weapons' toughness.

The four thousand-segment worm whips with spikes were kept in four concealed shooting chambers in the lower back of the mech, inconspicuous from the outside.

The mech's name was decided early on to be Han Jia. If it were up to Ye Chong, he would probably not want to take too much trouble in naming and just call it Number 1. However, since Mu had provided the name, even if using a random algorithm, Ye Chong did not mind it.

Han Jia's main weapon was its daggers. These were made from a fangbeast's canine teeth, with some heavy processing. The two daggers were slightly longer than the average mech's daggers, arching slightly and lined with natural serrated edges, with razor sharp tips. The daggers were as black as night, and as soon as Ye Chong was done making them, he found himself loving them very much!

Of all the weapons, Ye Chong found the daggers most handy, but their attack range was very limited. If only he still had Yu Di's UF magnetic sword, the work of Fred the Great! The UF magnetic swords sold in the streets were far inferior to the original, and Ye Chong could not see himself using them.

On Han Jia's left arm was a shield, its surface etched with scale-like patterns. It was made of iron lizard's scales gathered on the trash planet. These scales could survive unscathed from Mu's attack, and that left a deep impression in Ye Chong. He immediately thought of them when he began working on the shield.

After that, Ye Chong found that the iron lizard's scales could not only shield against physical attacks, but also energy based weapons. This impressed Ye Chong. It was as if the material was destined to be used for defense shields. There was also another advantageous property, and that was its light density. This made the shield much lighter than conventional metal shields.

Ye Chong accepted Mu's advice and made the shield with an overlapping method. This produced the scale-like patterns. Of course, Ye Chong sharpened the edges of the shield as per his habit. If he could add another function to the weapon, then why not?

Other than this, Ye Chong also removed Harmony of the Winter Aria's two auto lock-on double-edged shurikens and attached them on Han Jia. With that, Han Jia had some limited long range attack capabilities.

Ye Chong also wanted to add some barbs on Han Jia's shoulders, elbows, knees and feet, since they were unexpectedly useful in close range combat. However, Ye Chong rejected those in the end, since a mech like that would be too eye-catching, and that would be against his intention of keeping himself under the radar. Aside from that, it was similar to Black Cove's style, and Ye Chong did not want to be mistaken as one of them.

Han Jia's every detail was the result of Ye Chong's meticulous considerations. However, in the end, Ye Chong was still quite satisfied with it.

The most satisfying feature of Han Jia for Ye Chong would be its astonishing speed!

Han Jia's main body was made of skeletons, making it significantly lighter than metals. With the same propulsion force, Han Jia could move a good two Machs faster than Harmony of the Winter Aria! While Guardian could go up to Mach 10, it was only for a short burst. Han Jia, however, could fly at its top speed for long journeys. Compared to Harmony, Han Jia was definitely faster!

On the battlefield, just a tiny advantage in speed would provide a great overall advantage. With a speed of Mach 9, Ye Chong would definitely gain an upper hand going against the likes of the Sanctuary, Black Cove or the MPA. On top of that, with the ability of long range flight at Mach 9, it would be easier to escape!

After completion, Ye Chong used Guardian to make a thorough analysis of the mech, and fixed a few small but potentially fatal flaws.

Hei Zi gasped and marvelled at Ye Chong's work from the sidelines. While the old man said nothing, his eyes were shining brightly, staring up to the first full-skeleton mech in history. The two of them watched the mech, fully observant, and did not notice that Ye Chong had already left.

Ye Chong was exhausted! A month and a half of nonstop working with high concentration had drained him. Once Ye Chong had finalized his mech, he could no longer bear it as he found a passably tidy spot and slept! He fell asleep almost immediately after he lay down.

When Ye Chong woke up, it was already the third day. He was awakened by hunger, his empty stomach growling in protest.

Seeing some food placed beside him, Ye Chong started devouring them without hesitation. "These must be from Hei Zi," Ye Chong thought as he ate.

After he finished, his hunger was slightly lessened. Ye Chong picked himself up and went to the now completed Han Jia.

In terms of design, Han Jia was considered sparse, with no signs of decoration on it. Nonetheless, its natural style was refreshing. In terms of color, however, Han Jia was quite a handful. Each skeleton material was in a different hue - black, white, light green, dark red ... This gave Han Jia a unique enigma. Besides that, the unique texture of skeleton luster made Han Jia looked more like a carved sculpture of abstract art.

With the exception of the metallic shine from the titanium scarab's exoskeleton, other parts looked like jade, or wood, and some even looked like synthetic material. The mech looked odd, but it was undeniable that such a strange mech would draw attention from everyone!

Ye Chong could not help but knitted his brows.

Chapter 145: Learning

The one thing Ye Chong wanted to avoid the most was attention. On the trash planet, the last one standing was often the one lying in the dark, waiting to ambush. The quicker one was exposed under the star's light rays, the higher the probability of death! At the moment, if Ye Chong's identity was discovered by the Sanctuary, he would not stand a chance.

Every part of Han Jia, standing before him, told the story of a very special mech! "What an eyesore!" Ye Chong thought.

What should he do? Ye Chong pondered long and hard. He had wanted to build a mech that could hide his identity, but had ended up with one that made him the center of attention. He could not help but smile ironically! His eyes wandered to a corner stashed with bottles of all sorts, and Ye Chong unconsciously scanned through them. Ye Chong's vision suddenly focused on a silver bottle!

Ye Chong groaned at his own stupidity. Such a simple solution had taken him so long to reach! He picked himself up and walked towards the silver bottle!

Ye Chong looked at Han Jia, deeply satisfied!

Dazzling silver covered every part of Han Jia. The mech's earlier modest charisma was now gone without a trace. Now, Han Jia looked like an arriviste, making a clumsy show of his wealth! A moment ago, Ye Chong sprayed a layer of bright silver paint on Han Jia. However, Ye Chong was now deeply satisfied. Even if it was him seeing Han Jia among other mechs, he would probably not waste any extra attention on the mech.

Any slightly experienced mech pilot would know that the real masters would not draw attention to themselves. Only plain-looking mechs could potentially be advanced level mechs.

Only newcomers would paint their mechs in such a dazzling style, hoping for attention.

After giving Han Jia an ugly paint job, Ye Chong heard Hei Zi calling him, "Ye, Master would like to see you!"

"Okay!" Ye Chong replied, and headed outside. Ye Chong had already locked himself as Han Jia's user. Except for himself, no one else could examine Han Jia's interior. This was because Ye Chong did not want Han Jia's interior accessories to be known, since some of them were quite unsettling.

Han Jia's dimension keystone was linked to a light green bracelet, which Ye Chong put on his left wrist. Ye Chong had wanted a ring, but considering the effect of having too many rings on his fingers' movements, he chose a bracelet in the end.

There was one thing that he found himself quite annoyed with, and that was the fact that he could not find any brainwave activated dimension keystone in the area. All he found were old-fashioned sound activated ones. Sound activation was undesirable in terms of reaction time and discretion, and this vexed Ye Chong for a long time.

One could be sure that Han Jia was now a sight to behold. As Hei Zi entered and saw Han Jia's transformation, he gaped widely and froze in bewilderment, speechless as Ye Chong left unnoticed!

Ye Chong went to the old man. The old man was not tinkering with his tools as per usual, but sitting before his desk in the resting room, staring into space.

Ye Chong entered and greeted softly, "Master."

"Oh, Ye, you're here, sit!" The old man gathered his thoughts and looked at Ye Chong, sitting opposite him and looking back at him. He pondered for a long while, speaking slowly, "Ye, did you have any episodes from your strange illness recently?"

Ye Chong shook his head. "No." He did not understand why the

old man would suddenly ask about this.

The old man looked at Ye Chong meaningfully and said, "Hei Zi said that your illness can only be cured outside the Orbits, is that right?"

"Yes." Ye Chong nodded.

"It looks like you'll leave the Orbits for sure." The old man suddenly sighed.

"Yes."

"You're the first skeleton carver to ever make a full-skeleton mech. I was hoping you could help me teach Hei Zi, that he may reach your level one day! I know, your interest does not lie entirely in skeleton carving. Haha, I didn't think I would be able to see a full-skeleton mech in my entire lifetime, I'm quite satisfied! However, if you're leaving the Orbits, sigh, Hei Zi ..." The old man spoke hesitantly.

Ye Chong fell silent. He understood the old man, but what could he do?

"When do you plan on taking the Sanctuary's Trials?" The old man changed the topic abruptly and asked Ye Chong.

"After some time." Ye Chong continued explaining, "After I spend some time on alchemy."

"Eh, that's good! Teach Hei Zi in the meanwhile, he may be a little opaque but he's very grounded, and is never lazy!"

"Yes." Ye Chong replied. Even if the old man did not say so, Ye Chong had planned to do it all along.

The old man's expression suddenly turned serious, and focused his eyes on Ye Chong. "Ye, if you're thinking of leaving the Orbits, never let anyone know that you can build full-skeleton mechs. Or else, you may have to live your entire life under the eyes of the Sanctuary. Of course, if it's like that, you won't have much to

worry besides your freedom. For example, about your strange illness, the Sanctuary would never let a skeleton carver capable of building a full-skeleton mech to die of illness. As for the Sanctuary's power, I believe you understand that completely. Haha, well, can you accept this way of life?"

"No!" Ye Chong replied decisively. Without freedom, Ye Chong could never accept it.

The old man broke into a grin. "Haha, as I guessed. But if that's the case, Ye, you must be careful, never let anyone realize that you know how to build full-skeleton mechs. Remember, never! Or else, if the Sanctuary knew, you'll never leave the Orbits. I've reminded Hei Zi, and he'd never tell anyone. That full-skeleton mech that you have, it's best not to use it unless necessary, now that there are many who could tell the difference. Hmm, best if you paint the mech, so that it wouldn't be so obvious!"

Ye Chong silently applauded the old man's experience, but was also moved from the old man's concern about him.

Ye Chong left the old man's room and met Hei Zi again. Hei Zi gave Ye Chong an odd look. He could not understand how someone would intentionally make his own mech ugly! Besides, this was his rational Junior Brother, and that perplexed him.

Now that Ye Chong was not occupied, he spend his days revising the coursework given by Lunatic Guan. While Lunatic Guan's threats of punishment did not bother him, he still appreciated the knowledge, since he understood that it would form part of his strength, and might one day be crucial for his survival.

For someone who valued life as much as Ye Chong, that was the most convincing reason.

Other times, Ye Chong would teach Hei Zi about the foundational theories of mechs. However, the entire system of knowledge was too vast, and Hei Zi was not as good as Ye Chong was in terms of intelligence and foundation. Hence, he improved slowly, and Ye

Chong could not do much about it.

Ye Chong also allocated some time for Room 5, using the authorization password from Lunatic Guan to activate the room's photon processor and studied the secretive news and rules related to the ancient occupation that was alchemy. As he read on, Ye Chong gradually grew terrified. The world before him was a very mysterious one, an isolated world, with its own rules and social norms.

What Ye Chong was most interested in was the abilities of some unusual alchemists from obscure branches of the field. They mostly seemed inconceivable to Ye Chong.

One such example was a branch in microorganism studies. They could grow and multiply certain types of microorganisms up to tens of thousands of their original number. There was once a person who developed a grudge against one of them, and was secretly infected with this microorganism together with a special kind of catalyst. In the blink of an eye, that person began to age and wither quickly, and died a curious death.

This narrative immediately got Ye Chong's attention. Ye Chong was always vigilant against unknown forces. This was terrifying! Fortunately, these people were not battle enthusiasts, and had never sought conflict with others by their own initiative.

This mysterious world was mainly made up of ancient aristocratic families. Through a long history of accumulating knowledge, they could reach further depths in their field. As for those who supported academy establishments, traditional alchemists often thought it beneath themselves.

Ye Chong had never heard of the news in here. Even with Ye Chong's boldness, he was still chilled as he read through some of the information. There were too many strange things going on!

After finishing his reading, Ye Chong felt moved. The world was a vast place. How much more remained unknown? How many

worlds remained to be discovered?

Lunatic Guan finally returned, looking fatigued, worn out by the journey, her expression betrayed some sense of desolation. She saw Ye Chong and exchanged some casual words before returning to her room to rest.

The next morning, Lunatic Guan woke Ye Chong up for her so-called test.

The entire afternoon was spent taking the test.

Lunatic Guan's face did not show any emotions, but her heart was swirling like a tsunami. The coursework she gave Ye Chong was partly meant to make things difficult for him. While they were basic knowledge, but the content was abundant. For someone without any basics in alchemy, it would impossible to master them in such a short time. However, Ye Chong had done it!

"This guy is a genius!" The thought flashed past Lunatic Guan's mind. At the same time she found herself feeling a little excited!

She was not aware that Ye Chong was not entirely without any foundations in alchemy. Besides, the amount of information was nothing compared to what Shang had pestered Ye Chong to learn on alchemy.

Lunatic Guan nodded in approval on the surface, "Good god, your homework was done quite well! Hmm, since you're done with homework, we're going to continue on with the next phase of learning. This phase will focus on the basic skills in alchemy. Of course, theoretical studies will continue.

"Remember, for an alchemist, practice, is always more important than words!"

Lunatic Guan spoke her last sentence with a rare expression of seriousness.

Chapter 146: It's All the Red Liquor's Fault

Ever since that day, Ye Chong became busier, his daily schedule jam packed with activities, as though Lunatic Guan was trying to identify his limits. As for Ye Chong, he noticed for the first time that being an alchemist placed a high demand on his physical endurance. If not for his outstanding physical strength, he probably would have exhausted himself early on.

Once again, Ye Chong's performance was a pleasant surprise to Lunatic Guan. His seemingly frail body harboured extraordinary strength, as though he was always physically ready. Besides, he had great talent and was a quick study; his long, white fingers moved deftly, as though he was born to be an alchemist. This won much admiration from Lunatic Guan. In order to make Ye Chong "suffer", Lunatic Guan even invested her own time in him, and spent less time in drinking. Often, she would even forget all about drinking. Of course, Ye Chong was not foolish enough to remind her of that. Gradually, Lunatic Guan had forgotten of her original intention and began to teach Ye Chong more seriously. She began to treat Ye Chong like an actual student of hers without actually meaning to do so!

With one of them teaching in earnest, and another learning in earnest, Ye Chong improved quickly!

Ye Chong could finally relax a little, since this phase of learning had finally ended, and Lunatic Guan had granted him a few days' leave. Now, Ye Chong could synthesize his own strengthening chemical, since for a true alchemist, knowing the ingredients was enough to make the chemical easily. From the old man's point of view, Ye Chong's learning mission was completed.

With the rare moment of leisure, Ye Chong enjoyed his idle time by carving some little things out of some smaller skeleton pieces for practice, to keep his skills sharp. Ye Chong had no sense of aesthetics, and carved only mech models. He did not bring his

carving knife with him, and used the dagger gifted to him by Gu Shaoze.

Ye Chong looked satisfyingly at the final product in his hands, and kept his dagger back into his bag. Suddenly, he noticed the Red Liquor obtained from the young woman, and thought of Mu's description of the stone's properties with growing excitement.

"Shang, Mu said that Red Liquor will change in color when stimulated by alcohol, is that right?"

"Hmm, based on our database it should be right! Besides, you can always experiment to find out!" Shang spoke indifferently.

"Right, I can experiment to find out. Hm, alcohol, Lunatic Guan should have plenty of it here!" Will Lunatic Guan run out of alcohol? Absolutely not.

Ye Chong found Lunatic Guan leaning against the wall, sitting on the floor with a wine glass in hand, looking outside the door in a daze.

"Lend me your alcohol!" Ye Chong felt it would better to be straightforward. While both were his teachers, Ye Chong found himself unable to treat Lunatic Guan like he treated the old man, probably due to their age.

"Alcohol?" Lunatic Guan turned to him, awakened from her reverie, and looked in surprise at Ye Chong, probably not expecting such a request from him. However, as her vision swept past Ye Chong's right hand, Lunatic Guan's pupils dilated abruptly, and her breathing grew heavier!

Could she have recognized the Red Liquor? This question came to Ye Chong's mind, and his sharp eyes noticed Lunatic Guan's jade white hands trembling a little, a few drops of alcohol spilling out. Almost simultaneously, Ye Chong took a small step forward and reached his right hand out, fast as lightning.

Drip! One of the spilled alcohol drops landed precisely on the Red

Liquor in Ye Chong's right hand. In the blink of an eye, the seemingly inconspicuous Red Liquor looked as though it was drunk, and turned slowly into a faint shade of red. This faint shade spread out like a ripple and finally covered the entire surface of the rock. The droplet-shaped Red Liquor now looked like a jade in faint red, warm and adorable.

The transformation did not end there. The red hue turned darker and darker, and in the span of a few minutes, the Red Liquor turned from light red to a ghoulish dark red. The pendant now looked like a drop of fresh blood, moist and dazzling.

With all his attention focused on the Red Liquor, Ye Chong did not notice Lunatic Guan's expression changed drastically as the Red Liquor transformed! Lunatic Guan stared fixedly at the Red Liquor in Ye Chong's hand, her face full of disbelief, and her expression unreadable.

The Red Liquor seemed to come alive in Ye Chong's hand, spreading warmth like a real droplet of semi-coagulated blood. Ye Chong could not but marvel at the sight! Who knew what other secrets the material had to offer?

Just then, Ye Chong smelled a thin, fragrant scent, and froze. Of all the changes that Mu mentioned, this scent was not one of them. Ye Chong held the necklace to his nose. "Hmm, not the pendant. Ah, so it's from the old string. But this smell is really nice, it makes me feel very peaceful." Ye Chong thought to himself.

"Isn't it a nice smell? That string may look inconspicuous, but it's actually made of sky lantern grass, a strong material, and upon contact with heat, it releases a fragrant smell that has a calming effect, and is quite rare!" Lunatic Guan's words came slowly.

"Sky lantern grass?" Ye Chong lifted his head, and was surprised to find Lunatic Guan's face as pale as a sheet, her eyes staring fixedly at the necklace in Ye Chong's hand.

"What's with her?" Ye Chong wondered. While he did not

understand the situation, he still noticed something unusual about Lunatic Guan.

"Sky lantern grass is endemic to the planet Guang Hua. The locals treated it as a sign of peace and harmony, and like to use it for decoration. For the alchemists there, it is also an excellent ingredient." Lunatic Guan's soft words reverberated throughout the room, but her eyes never left the necklace on Ye Chong's hand.

Ye Chong offered his hand out and held the necklace before Lunatic Guan.

Lunatic Guan hesitated, as though struggling with herself, the mist in her eyes gradually accumulating to a bursting reservoir, and tears rolled down silently along her pale cheeks. Her lips were now bloodless from her tightened mouth, as she reached out a trembling right hand and slowly approached the necklace held in Ye Chong's right hand.

As the tips of her fingers touched the droplet-shaped Red Liquor, the sensitive Ye Chong noticed her body shook a little. This made Ye Chong fully realize that the necklace and Lunatic Guan had a very deep relationship.

Receiving the necklace from Ye Chong, Lunatic Guan finally could not hold it any longer. Her left hand moved to cover her mouth, and she began to sob.

Ye Chong left quietly.

Back in his room, Ye Chong spoke to Shang.

"Shang, do you know what's going on?" Ye Chong expressed his confusion. Through it all, he understood nothing.

"Based on her actions, she probably has a very deep history with the necklace!" Shang's reply came like a sigh.

"History?" Ye Chong still did not quite understand.

"She's probably some relative of hers."

"Relative? How did you know?" Ye Chong asked in bafflement.

"Sigh, how can you not understand something so simple? Sigh, I suppose so, a guy like you probably will not spend time on watching movies and the like, it's only natural that you cannot understand! However, do you have any better guess?" Shang spoke derisively.

"No!" Ye Chong's answer was brisk.

"And there you have it!"

"Shang, are you sure you're alright?" Ye Chong asked out of concern. As he had gotten used to Shang's usual non-stop blabbering, Shang's quietness now was a little unsettling.

"Problem? Me, having a problem? The probability for that is very small. Even a logical mistake that is fatal for the average PSI is not all that fatal to me. So, about this, you don't have to worry, Ye. As for my current state, that's because I and Mu are trying to recover some damaged data. 90 percent of our resources are currently spent there." Shang explained.

"Damaged data? It is from before?" Ye Chong asked.

"Yes. We found that some of them could potentially be recovered, and so we had tried various methods of recovery, but the results do not seem good!"

"Oh, don't rush yourselves!" Ye Chong could only console them.

Knock knock! The sound came from the door.

With Ye Chong's hearing sense, he could already hear Lunatic Guan's footsteps. Her act of knocking, however, was a surprise to Ye Chong, since barging in seemed more of her style.

Lifting his head, he saw Lunatic Guan entering the room with her eyes red and swollen, with wet tracks on her face. Lunatic Guan came in and immediately questioned, "Where did you get this necklace from?"

"Where did I get it from?" Ye Chong was about to answer, when all of a sudden he realized that his relationship with Guardian would be exposed. Ye Chong reacted vigilantly and opted for silence. Lunatic Guan was not someone he trusted, not like with Hei Zi and the old man.

"Tell me!" Witnessing Ye Chong remaining silent, Lunatic Guan grew anxious.

Ye Chong kept his silence, knowing that this would better serve to protect him.

Something flashed past in Lunatic Guan's eyes, and she spoke in a sigh, "Are you really not telling?"

Planning to keep his silence, Ye Chong suddenly noticed his vision getting more and more blurry, and colors began swirling around as Shang's panicking voice came from somewhere far away. Ye Chong was still in a daze, not realizing what was happening. He was about to call for Shang, but he blacked out.

Lunatic Guan looked at Ye Chong, lying on the floor, and sighed delicately, "Little Ye, I don't want to do this, but if you're not telling, I'll have to make you!"

Lunatic Guan immediately shut all the doors outside and, ignoring Ye Chong on the floor, hastened to the innermost room and removed a few bottles of reagents from the shelves in a corner.

Lunatic Guan focused intently, her hands moving at a dazzling speed. If Ye Chong were awake now, he would definitely be impressed by Lunatic Guan's deft and precise movements. Before long, she had a bottle of light purple reagent before her.

Carefully holding the reagent against the light, she could see a few thin silver lines in the light purple reagent.

"This should be right!" Lunatic Guan muttered to herself.

She dashed towards Ye Chong, crouched beside him, and placed the bottle of reagent before Ye Chong's nose before removing the

bottle cap. Light purple mist rose from the opening, scattered with fine silver sparkles. The mist swirled like an enchanted snake and found its way into Ye Chong's nostrils.

Lunatic Guan's misted eyes flashed with regret, but it was immediately replaced by certain determination.

Chapter 147: A Gift from Lunatic Guan

Ye Chong forced his eyes open... his pounding head felt heavier than the meteorite. It was cracking so hard that he could literally hear the cracking sound in his head. "Ow..." He managed to get up, though laboriously he did, as he attempted to get his mind clearer, he shook his head forcefully like swinging the wrecking ball.

"I did not expect you to stay in one piece. Such miracle," teased Shang.

"The heck happened, Shang?" Holding his throbbing head, he expressed his doubt in his mind right away.

"Mhm, it's a pity for I don't have much information regarding this in my databank so I can't give you an explanation, although she did leave you with something, a gift, perhaps it could be an aid for you. Tsk, tsk, tsk, Ye, your alertness had been degrading quite badly these few days. Don't tell me it was because of a lack of stimulation of bloodiness for your bloodthirsty self? Yikes, you are indeed a beast who lived on its instincts, Ye. I did not see it coming, the day where you actually get snuck upon by a lass. Tsk, tsk, tsk, oh my Fal galaxy, please don't tell me you actually had some chemistry occurred between her inside you? Hmm, even though this is quite understandable, I think..." The motivational talk had commenced once again, under the supreme enlightenment of Shang...

Ye Chong tried standing up. It was supposed to be a simple action yet it was so energy consuming that he almost collapsed again. The heck in Orbits that Lunatic Guan had done to me? I could not move a muscle... I could not feel my strength. Waking up seemed to be the greatest challenge ever to Ye Chong currently.

?

His eyes discerned a piece of microchip laying on the table nearby. That should be it, the gift which Lunatic Guan left for Ye

Chong, as mentioned by Shang. He grabbed the chip and inserted it into the processor sitting at one spot of the room. A visual of Lunatic Guan was projected on the hologram after that.

"Oh, my Little Ye, my Ye boy, Zzt I simply did not foresee these much of surprise from you. Mhm, I had gotten what I wanted to know from your mouth. Zzt Thank you again, Ye my boy. If it wasn't you, I would have taken forever to find my beloved sister. Zzzt The good old me is in search of my younger sister now! Zzzzt

Zzzt Hehehe, Ye, my sweet, my lovely, you are greater than I had ever expected. Looks like I had really underestimated you way too much. Zzzt Kekeke, you know it by heart, that I always have something for potent men like you. Zzzt

Regarding that necklace, don't worry, Zzzzt I'll have it, in exchange for a little~gift~ I left~ for my s-w-e-e-t Ye boy~ You would love it! Zzzt Yes, yes, I finally got some clues on my sister's whereabouts and I'm not letting it slip through my fingers. Zzzt Also, Ye, again, thank you for saving my sister, even though you did not intend to save her.

Zzzt Lastly... Hmmm, what should I say to conclude this love letter to my boy? Okay.

Take care, my juicy fruity pie! Zzzt Oh, I almost forgot, I hope that you would learn from your lesson after this. Always be alert when you're facing ones from the Alchemy, Zzzt be it like an old but charming lady like me, promise me, okay? Kekekekekekekekekekeke!"

Lunatic Guan was holding her glass in the visual, cheekily she swung her glass, a gesture for her version of "cheers" to end her regards. The visual was immediately terminated afterwards. And right when Ye Chong was going to leave, Zzzt! The processor prompted, "More data has been discovered, perform Reading?"

Ye Chong was stupefied at first and he quickly regained himself, "Yes. Perform Reading!"

Reading...

1%))))) 15%))))) 40%))))) 75%))))) 100%

Reading complete!

Ye Chong finally understood what the so-called "gift" from Lunatic Guan was after the processor had done playing everything. The chip generally contained the entire syllabus of the Alchemy course for Ye Chong, with every single section prepared wholeheartedly by Lunatic Guan herself. And Ye Chong, without doubt, could master the course all by himself with the help of this chip, although... "Man, this is quite a long course..." The size of the syllabus was beyond his expectation, it was large... larger than Trash Planet Ye Chong assumed, for one second. He hurriedly skimmed through the course structure and he reached for the eject button, "Hold up!" Lunatic Guan's visual jumped at him.

What else does she want to tell? Ye Chong's head was jammed with bewilderment.

Unlike the visual before, the Lunatic Guan in the hologram this time was sterner than her usual self, "Little Ye, technically, I actually did not have the intention of providing you the following information... but you are my only student, my only apprentice to my succession while you seemed to be in quite a sticky situation. Thus, I decided to keep this for you, although I'm not certain if it would be useful for you, hopefully it would at least. However, there's one thing you have to remember by heart, likewise to my other advice before, this is equally important - do not, never ever be overly dependent on it. The only thing you could depend on is the knowledge you mastered all by yourself, no aid, no shortcut, nothing else. You have great talents, I must admit. If you keep up the good works, you would one day indeed, surpass me and become the best chemist in history of alchemy. Kek... though I don't think I'll live to witness that..." Her smile was bitter, bitter than the white wine on a funeral night.

"I know, Ye my boy, you want to leave the Orbits. Kekekeke, wonder why would I know? Well, you would know it after learning everything I have tailored for you. If you got out successfully, yes, Ye my boy, 'if' you got out, could you please... do this good old me a favor, head to L. Shaft City on Planet Guang Hua for me? It's Line Shaft City in full... And remember! It must be done only after you finished my course. While... for me... I don't think I would ever be able to leave this place... My only last wish was to see my sister again. Mhm, Little Ye, may the odds be with both of us! Oh yeah, please don't forget to tell your master the formulae of the strengthening liquids he wanted, that was probably what he really expected you to learn from me anyway! Don't disappoint him!"

The voice of her last syllable trailed off as the visual vanished instantly. Beep. A window prompted on the processor, "The Guan's Automatic Analysis Mechanism has been activated. Please insert the main ingredient and final request."

Ye Chong's eyes were fixed at the demonstration on the hologram in blank dismay.

"Fantastic! Magnifique! Ye, this Lady Guan is marvelous! See! Ye, like what I had told you earlier, Lady Guan is absolutely a beauty who wields both appearance and wisdom! Tsk, tsk, tsk, I can't believe there are humans able to produce such a self-analytical system. Genius I must say! And very gorgeous too! Ye, how many times have I suggested you before? You should have hooked up with her! But did you listen to me? Nooooo! Great, guess what? Such a bright and demure lady had gone to nowhere! Tell me where are you going to find a replacement?" Shang sounded truly agonized in his tone...

The words obviously did not go through Ye Chong's mind. In actuality, he was utterly dumbfounded by the invention, as never once in his life he would see someone being able to make something like this, especially when it was based on expertise of alchemy. And no chemist gain their skillfulness from text books,

they have and always have been gaining it from experience, since a majority of the concept behind the working of alchemy was unknown to mankind, they could solely depend on their experience to identify a certain kind of pattern, formula, combination that would work in consistency. And this was why those ancient families of aristocrats stood a better chance to dig much deeper into this profession than the folks, as their forebears had accumulated much more experience as well as expertise throughout the ages.

The program before Ye Chong however, had broken the thumb rule of the field. Ye Chong could be a total illiterate towards the workaround of processor but for the basic fundamentality of it, he knew it better than anybody else. This program was unquestionably the outcome of a kind of calculation, with basis on a kind of known theory, an identified pattern, a string of formula and they were clear, clear enough to run a program. If it was a fuzzy theory founded by experience, there would be no way for a motherboard-and-circuits to process it and provide calculated judgement based on requests.

How would such innovation not shock our Ye Chong? Right when everyone else in the galaxy assumed how a chemist was built upon experience than knowledge, this half-drunken, half-mad, half-conscious drinker namely Lunatic Guan had already hit the core of the whole profession!

"Mhm... Ye. So she wanted you to go to Planet Guang Hua. By common sense, that should be where her home was located. Well, Ye, how about we just hit the road, get to her place and see if there were any close relative like her sisters for instance, be them younger or elder, you could consider taking them if they were not bad. Sigh... By the way, such a perfect lass isn't something you could see on the street everyday, Ye... Gosh, my heart, my pitiful heart, all shattered into a milky way of depression," he carried on his own play, Shang cried out in pain.

"Hmm, so how does this mechanism work? I wonder..."

Those cheesy lines did not reach Ye Chong though.

Ye Chong was excited after the shock. He could not wait to validate the capability of the mechanism, as he connected the processor to the analysis system as instructed by the manual.

"There's always one thing I wanted to know," muttered Ye Chong as he pulled out the Do-Kun stone from his belongings. As what Mu Shang had stated before, this stone was certainly rare and chances were Lunatic Guan might have never come across such piece before. Only an unknown sample could effectively trial the applicability of the Guan's automatic analysis mechanism.

The moment he took the stone out, the room was tinted by its ever-changing color and glow with a kind of fluidity.

He carefully placed it into the machine and he selected Cultivation with Presets at the Cultivation Methodology section, with the final request being "to achieve growth".

Tick. Tick Tick! Beep!

The machine started running as few mechanical sounds were heard, a variety of data were refreshing rapidly. Sadly like Lunatic Guan had mentioned, he had yet mastered the very gist of alchemy, he only managed to recognize the meanings of a few variables shown in the data. The mechanism was running and morphing... And Ye Chong had the slightest idea on what was going on. "The only thing you could depend on is the knowledge you mastered all by yourself, no aid, no shortcut, nothing else," Lunatic Guan's voice echoed in his head. Well it seemed like there was assuredly a need to master the syllabus in the chip. Ye Chong made up his mind.

Beep Beep Beep. Beep.

10 minutes or so had lapsed, the morphing process in the program finally ended. A result was projected on the screen along

with mechanical voices briefing the content, "Request achievable. Ingredients required : Kong Stone, [Milles Radices](#)(grass), Sand of Rolling Tides, Softening Factor #13, Fique Crystal..."

Ye Chong had no idea what he had just heard, as his eyes went large like saucers. Other than the softening factor, the remaining materials sounded alien to him. No way he would be able to validate the reliability of the machine under a scenario like this.

Nonetheless, the fact that the mechanism was able to produce such result was convincing enough to Ye Chong.

After a bit of pondering, he was still keen to insert the entire content of this chip right into Mu Shang. Imagine if he accidentally dropped it somewhere someday, there would be no cure for him to remedy his tormenting regrets.

Judging by Lunatic Guan's words, it seemed like she had known quite a few stuffs about Ye Chong himself. The heck happened? Ye Chong was left in the dark. He was only sure of the fact that that bottle of Red Liquor had something to do with Lunatic Guan. She said she was in search of her sister... Could that Zhu Ling, the girl he met that day be her younger sister? Ye Chong tried to recall the impression she left in his mind... but then... "Man, it's like two different persons from a total different corner of galaxy... are you sure they are related...?"

Ye Chong deployed Shang and rolled into the cabin. He inserted the chip right into the processor next, since to Ye Chong, there was no other safe place like Shang's databank in this world.

"So Shang..." Ye Chong initiated, "What had happened when I was unconscious?"

Mu Shang had always been conscious all times, everything in Ye Chong's surrounding would never escape their detection.

"See it yourself. I can't explain it," said Shang as he played back the imagery he detected.

The hologram was of high-definition, crystal-clear it was in recording everything that had happened to Ye Chong. In the visual, Ye Chong suddenly collapsed... That was the moment Lunatic Guan stormed into the room and had produced a very strange kind of purple reagent. And Ye Chong was very confident that he did not recognize that reagent. He then saw Lunatic Guan hung the tube of reagent right below his nose.

And that was when the creepiest moment happened. Ye Chong, despite being unconscious, sat up, in the state of trance, his eyes were soulless and Lunatic Guan began asking a few questions. Ye Chong answered all her inquiries sincerely and immediately. Throughout the process, Ye Chong looked empty on his expression, his eyes zoned out completely, literally like a puppet on strings. His mouth would utter the answer obediently.

Creepy! This is too creepy!

The visual sent chills down to his spines. He could blatantly feel goosebumps came rolling all over his body uncontrollably, while his head was running cold.

This is too scary!

Milles Radices literally meant Multiple Roots in Latin, which was the original name of the plant in Chinese 多根草 (Many-Roots-Grass). As most of the terms in science today are made in Latin, we decided to stick to Latin naming too.

Chapter 148: Fading Out

It was the first time Ye Chong witnessed the potency of a chemist. And he was the lab rat too, which was not really a glory experience to be remembered, though he did not lose anything specific during the process. In spite of the fact that he was barely injured, he still was quite dismal, as he truly disliked such sensation of being not the master of his own life for once. The worst part was, the incident had justified the truth that his alertness had dropped this harshly. If he was able to deploy Shang in the nick of time, it would have turned out to be a total different story, yet out of ignorance and hesitation he forsook the very last opportunity to make a turnabout in this.

Well, self-reflection aside, Ye Chong indeed had to make a change in his original plan. Formerly, Ye Chong simply planned to learn alchemy, the basic from Lunatic Guan at least. Then he would try applying a trial at the Sanctuary to make way out of the Orbits. Assuming he failed the trial, he would plan for an alternative. The catch was none other than exiting the Orbits itself. The Orbits, as everyone had known before, was a place one could enter easily but not a place one could also exit at ease. Every spaceship that had entered the proximity of the Orbits would be locked up by the Sanctuary. Some may suggest to leave without a spaceship, but those were the dreamers who had no idea what retardation in the Haleyson they had just suggested. Even if Ye Chong made it back to Red Giant, the outermost planet of the Orbits, it would still be far-fetched as the closest course to the outside was long abandoned. You could try waiting at the spot for a spaceship to pass by but the probability would be lower than seeing a meteor shower in a black hole. You would die before the spaceship appeared, if it would ever appear that is.

And the situation had changed drastically for Ye Chong. He had to advance the date of application trial.

Lunatic Guan had utterly destroyed the entire databank in all processors at her place before she left. It was saddening for Ye Chong as the destruction also involved the apparatuses and reagents for the professionals. They might not be some rare stuffs like the Do Kun stone, but Ye Chong understood the fact that utensils and chemicals this many would easily cost him an arm and a leg. And sadly Ye Chong had never tasted the dazzling pouches of fortune before to afford these again.

He made his way back to the old man's home and informed him that Lunatic Guan had left. "Well..." The old man sighed, "She is also a person of misfortune." That was the only statement coming from the old man, who seemed to know something in the dark. Ye Chong did not muster sufficient curiosity to further inquire about it however.

"This is the formula for the strengthening liquid," said Ye Chong as he took out a piece of chip.

"Pass it to Hei Zi," waved the old man as he turned away and continued working on his task at the board.

Easier said than done... Hei Zi's understanding was truthfully terrible as he remained in confusion even after Ye Chong gave him the exact formula to produce the liquids. "Can't help it..." Ye Chong eventually taught him on how to produce the strengthening liquid repetitively.

As usual, they had a dinner that night. Nan Nan was giggling while chewing her food. She was so happy to see her Big Brother returning. She could not stop telling Ye Chong how much she missed him.

...

In the middle of the night, Ye Chong took a look around this heartwarming place. Little Nan Nan should be in her dream, chasing the bad doggie away maybe, while Hei Zi... wonder what he was doing... and the old man, he should be rushing his work at

the workshop underground. Amidst silence he put a chip containing basic mech mechanic theories on the table. This was the only thing useful to Hei Zi he believed he could have left him. And on top of Little Nan Nan's bed, Ye Chong quietly placed a red bone hat, which every layer of painting coated, every piece of bones connected was by his own hands.

"Ye, are you sure you aren't bidding farewell to them?" asked Shang softly.

"Yeah, I'm good," Ye Chong replied flatly as he turned away from home, walked into the darkness, heading to the nearest Sanctuary.

"Why... Why not?"

"..." No word was heard from Ye Chong, as he hurried his way.

... ..

"Hmmm..." Lied on the bed, Yan Bingxuan was reviewing the entire incident. Rather restless he had been, as the operation of finding out the rumored thief to the Sanctuary before had caused chaos in the Orbits. And on top of that, the thief rumored by the insiders had yet to be caught, while there was a new rumor recently, claiming that a pilot had been murdered by the thief himself. He was amazed however, considering how great the thief was for he was able to steal things from the Sanctuary, managed to escape in grace from the Sanctuary while keeping the insiders of the Sanctuary this worked up to capture him. He should be no commoner. Frankly speaking, he did not really believe that rumor of pilot inside the Sanctuary being killed. He had tried applying being a pilot of the Sanctuary back then and of course, he failed miserably. Pathetically he only managed to become a patrolman at the area in the end. How could the pilots, the chosen one after the tedious trials, be slaughtered this effortlessly? Thought so in disdain, no way the specialized pilots would be overcome by a trash from the outside.

Nonetheless, thanks to that thief, if it was not because of the

search that time, I would never know that filthy goat Ge had actually gotten an apprentice himself! Yan Bingxuan thought of that fine young man. He might be a bit slender compared to the blacksmith in the Orbits, but he was absolutely a talent for the skeleton artistry. Yan Bingxuan did not foresee this filthy stubborn old man was capable of finding such a good apprentice. Hehe, this is a kind young man indeed, for he actually gave me such a big gift. Up to this time, I remembered the face of the authority when they received those 3 mechs. Rumor said that the mechs were even tested out by the ace of the Sanctuary, the famous Madam Feng Su herself. Such an honor! Ge that old goat said this was just the mech in production. But even a mech in production gave me promotion 3 times in a row. Everyone was eyeing me with envy! Thinking so, the patrolman was proud. Such a lovely hen that laid the golden eggs. I must keep this old hen carefully if I want to prosper. Yang Bingxuan could already see his bright future glowing in the twinkles of Venuses, as he drooled in greed.

But dammit I must say, it seemed like there's a quota to my luck! And apparently I had ran out of luck! Right after I got promoted as a chief patrol, things happened at my place! A traitor from the elite group had sneaked to my area and caused havoc. That traitor actually got rid of my entire team, escaped and killed one of the pilots! Goddammit! Had this world really changed? We now could see a traitor in the Sanctuary? And the traitor was also the nobility from the elite group? Had this traitor gone nuts?

Elite group, gasp, the elite group... It even gave Yan Bingxuan a shudder from thinking of how the person was from the elite group alone. That is a freaking monster from the elite group! And I am nothing but a little patrolman who could barely swear at a gangster on a train platform! I would be gashed upon immediately and become a filler of its bloody fangs! Yan Bingxuan was definitely a tough-looking guy outside, but he was a delicate boy inside. And most people would be deceived at first glimpse. He was alarmed especially after seeing the team of Dawn mechs who came to his

aid. He could not imagine how a powerful mech these many could barely catch even a piece of the foe. Seriously, he was glad that he never encountered that monster alone.

The Dawn mechs eventually retreated with an follow-up order from the higher-ups, "Stay alert! Any happening, report us at first moment." Patrolman Yan was well-aware of the order. He was the obedient listener, the Mr. Yes in the team. He did not give a damn in reality however. I'm not that stupid to stay at the deck when the ship is sinking. My life goes before anything else!

The havoc has been resolved now... and I could rest for a bit. I know, I know, I had ranked up too quickly. Everyone is pissed, everyone is waiting to see me humiliated. If I don't be a little bit more careful, I'll be kicked off my seat and be wheeling down the hill.

Now, let the patrolman get his rest...

Phew...

Beep! Beep! Beep!

Just when he thought he could catch his breath for a second, the communicator on the table rang. A hiccup occurred inside him for some reason. He did not feel right with the incoming call.

"H...Hello. Yes..."

...

"What?" He was ultimately shocked by the report from his subordinates.

... ..

This was the first time Ye Chong paid the local Sanctuary a visit. The building was not dramatically adorned and appeared to be a house made out of bricks, like most of the residences in the Orbits, just that the Sanctuary was much larger in comparison. The walls outside were layered by some unknown vines of fresh greenness,

which gave the building a sense of Mother Nature.

He arrived at the lobby after the entrance. There were 4 pillars standing at the center of the lobby and similar to the walls outside, they were all covered up in vines of the same kind too. The lobby appeared to be rather spacious as not many people were there. Judging by how the communicator was the only hi-tech thing in the lobby, it looked like the Sanctuary was resistant towards technologies... Mumbled Ye Chong in his mind.

A counter sat right at the opposite of the entrance. A young man was at the counter and he seemed... to be... asleep? Habitually Ye Chong's steps fell so light that the man did not sense his existence even when he was standing right beside the counter.

"Such a lazy bum. Show some respect to your own occupation will you?" Shang commented in dissatisfaction.

Ye Chong lifted his finger and knocked on the table twice.

"Aagrnanlxz!" The sleeping beauty had been waken up, in shock, as he mumbled some gibberish, rubbing his bleary eyes and took a look around in astonishment. The eyes of the sloth converged at Ye Chong at last. "Agoanmdwe!" Another gibberish as he jumped up from his seat, realizing he was on a duty at the moment. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry... Sir... Sir... I wonder if you have anything I could help you with?" Seemingly the young man was new at this Sanctuary, seeing how he retained that shunning humbleness in him.

Practically the young man was intrigued too, since people rarely visited the Sanctuary. The visitors mostly would be some mentalist or mentalist-pilots, coming for work, while the man before him was obviously neither of them. He might be a novice patrolman at the Sanctuary, he still could spot the difference. Mentalist would always put on a green clothing while the pilots would be in their tidy pilot uniforms instead, with an expression of pride. The visiting man had none of those, he was showing indifference...

which looked like those old mentalists... but he was not wearing any pale green clothing that the young man could know of.

Moreover, it was midnight. What in the Orbits would this man come to the Sanctuary at a timing like this? Very curious, the young man was curious.

"I would like to apply for the Level 5 trial at the sanctuary," his request came flatly.

"What?" Boomed the young man, in panic he responded, "Ah. Um, oh, uh, a moment please." The young man clumsily stampeded towards the communicator at the side and rang to the chief patrolman. Stuttering he reported to chief.

Ye Chong's sensitive hearing had heard every single word uttered by the young man. He found that avoidant eye contact and shrinking posture of the young man while on the communicator to be quite interesting.

"Such a scaredy cat. You could have tried acting professional," Shang gave another disdainful remark.

Yang Bingxuan piloted his mech and rushed all the way to the Sanctuary. No doubt his curiosity aroused by surprise was nothing lower than young man on duty. Ye Chong and Shang on the other hand did not get all the hassle and drama occurring around them, since they did not have an idea on what a Level 5 Trial actually was. And Yang Bingxuan, being a patrolman for the past 10 few years, had his first time witnessing someone requesting a Level 5 Trial. Back in the days when the Level 5 Trial was first introduced at the Sanctuary, people flooded the center to apply. At the eg, only 2 persons had passed; the following year had one before and nobody else after! That was the time when people realized how challenging it was to pass the trial. "Don't even think about it if you aren't even the master in your field!" said everyone upon mentioning the trial, which was the direct cause to the drastic decrease in applicants of the following years.

So one year, Yang Bingxuan took over as the patrolman and... well, no one had ever come and apply for the trial. He did overhear stories of one doctor applying for the trial few years back from the other area, though he was disqualified at the very last day.

Whoever desired to be an applicant must have not only the courage but also the great confidence in his or her own capabilities. "When in the Orbits did we even have those kinds of people in our area? And I don't even know them?" Yang Bingxuan was dying to know.

Chapter 149: Question

Yan Bingxuan pushed the door open. A rather willowy silhouette was on his feet at the vacant Sanctuary lobby. He struck Yan Bingxuan as being familiar but... the patrolman could not recall whom the silhouette reminded him of. This should be the one applying for Level 5 Trial I supposed? But why does this man look no stranger to me? Yan Bingxuan felt weird...

"Good day!" The young man got up gracelessly upon seeing Yan Bingxuan, "Chief!" The salutation went courteously.

As a response, the chief nodded in dignity as he trotted towards Ye Chong. All the time he had been wondering what in the Orbits a man sought such trial with difficulty at such a timing and "Ah!" Yan Bingxuan was astonished when he recognized who the applicant was as he got closer.

"Good day," nodded Ye Chong in respect as he greeted, "Uncle Yan."

"Oh it's Ye, my little blacksmith in training." His expression turned gentle right away, "What's with the visit on such a late night? Do you have anything in request? Do word it if you wish. I would not treat your request with informality, as long as it's within my capabilities," he smiled as he spoke, yet his inside was screaming in terror, for elderly's sake don't tell me this is the applicant for the Level 5 Trial!

"Thank you for your kind words. Yes, I do have something to do," responded Ye Chong, "I would like to apply for the Level 5 Trial at the Sanctuary," he said calmly.

"Le-Level 5 Trial?" Pretentiously the patrolman reacted with shock as he spoke on in flowery concern, "What had made our blacksmith think of the Level 5 Trial so suddenly? Was it a little bit too early for now? So you wanted to leave the Orbits? Oh, Little Ye, Little Little Ye, did you bump into some troubles recently? If you

did, you could have told me everything! I'll solve it for you! If anyone with blind eyes had offended you, tell your Uncle Yan and let your Uncle Yan to settle him for ya, all for justice, for our boy." The gravel had been slammed on the table of his Honor, undoubtedly the patrolman was very much not delightful of this request. Ye Chong was a hen that laid golden eggs! Nobody would be delightful to see their money-printing machine simply flying away!

But then, regarding how Ye Chong had the desire to leave the Orbits, he did not express much worries. Psh, you want to pass the Level 5 Trial of the Sanctuary? What do you think this is? Playing house? How long have you been with Ge that old goat? How much have you learned? And you wanted to pass Level 5? In your dreams, boy. Not even your master, that old goat could pass if he came and applied for it!

In his opinion, Ye Chong's failure was inevitable, though it would be another story regarding if he would return to his area afterwards... All he was concerned about was if Ye Chong wanted to leave his area, there would be no way for him to stop that from happening. Ye Chong had yet mentioned this but obviously this had become a bad beginning for him.

"No, uncle. I just wanted to apply," Ye Chong did not change his mind.

"Ye, boy, you got to think it through. Don't be hot-headed in this. You do have the bravery to try challenging the trial but you must know that you would be given punishment if you failed the trial accordingly. And chances are you would regret it for the rest of your life! So you have to be really, really sure you wanted to take on the trial. Why don't you head home and discuss it with your master first?" It would be pointless for him to beat around the bush at that moment, he decided to go straight to the point instead.

"Oh, save the discussion. I'm making an application now." Ye

Chong's expression remained unchanged, probably was not because of how he was confident on passing the trial but how he simply did not have any other choice. The killing syndrome inside him had been inactive for quite sometimes. Maybe it was due to the effect after learning meditation or it was due to his mere luck. There could be a cure everywhere else but not here. Only if he would leave the Orbits as soon as possible, the syndrome could be eliminated. And the single thing that stood in his way out was this trial. So, by hook or by crook, he would take on the test.

The patrolman was helpless in stopping Ye Chong, since beating around the bush and ordering him straight up did not work at all. He did not dare to try doing anything funny ever since, considering how the Sanctuary had been treating the applicants very solemnly. He could be skewed if he tried to fiddle with Ye Chong! Well, he could not understand the whole point of setting up an unnecessary trial for residents to exit in the very first place. This was not only unnecessary, but also would cause the reduction in the number of talents within the Orbits. Those who could succeed in the Level 5 Trial must be the greatest master in their fields. And the Sanctuary was letting these people to leave the place? Would that not be a major loss to the Orbits itself? Ugh, I seriously don't get it, I wonder which elderly had hit on his head to make such a flawed system.

Of course, these rants were just rumbling inside the patrolman, no way he would have the courage to spit them out.

Seeing how determined Ye Chong looked, the patrolman could only do as he requested. He begged to the Orbits that Ye Chong would fail the trial and stay here after... "Hah!" he laughed as he went tapping Ye Chong's shoulders, "You are a young man indeed, having the drive to overcome everything in sight! Uncle Yan certainly admires fine young man like you! Never mind, it's okay if you failed, you could try it again. As long as you are here, Uncle Yan would be positive of this!"

Ye Chong reflexively dodged the his hands at first, but that would look really rude, so he pulled himself back roughly in the end and let the tapping happen. "Thank you Uncle Yan." His face was grim. "A moment please, my boy!" He headed to the communicator.

"Yes, good evening, sire!" Yan Bingxuan reported to the higher-up through the communicator, mentioning there was an applicant currently at the lobby. "Okay, Ye. All set!" Shut the communicator, he turned to Ye Chong, "The authority would send a spaceship to pick you up later. I'm not sure where exactly they would trial you, but the men on the spaceship should be telling you what to do."

Ye Chong nodded his head in understanding. The Level 5 Trial did look like not a simple test indeed, as the location was not known to everyone, not even the insiders at the Sanctuary. Intriguing... the reason behind this.

Ye Chong picked a chair nearby and sat down. The wooden chair was unexpectedly not as comfy as the cheapest chair in the 5 major galaxies. And Ye Chong spent the next 3 hours on such chair, which was impressive to the patrolman as Ye Chong had barely changed his posture ever since. It was a rare sight to see an active young man like Ye Chong being able to be this undisturbed and patient. I do expect much from you, Ye. You would one day become something.

Certainly Ye Chong was calm, he had been exchanging words with Shang inside his head. "You see, love is a kind of necessity in everyone's life and the only necessity in the history of humankind to be able to replace eating, drinking or even sleeping." Shang was performing a kind of "mentality modification" inside Ye Chong, or in his language, "paradigm rebirth". Ye Chong would be naturally disinterested of it, but it did become an average entertainment while waiting for his ride.

"Ye, tsk, tsk. You understood my words?" Shang grew excited as he saw how the mechanical boy finally showing interests to his affectionate insights of life, he started to get more elaborative over

the time, he would includes stories, quotations and even a play during his lecture, which Ye Chong found out quite a number of weird stuffs inside... Like in stories Shang had told, those capable men must have a woman at his back. Mhm, some of them even have more than one woman at the back. Well, that... that'd be weird. Why must a man have a woman at the back? I don't have a woman at my back you see. But I'm not dead and I'm kicking alive! Oh, is it a kind of timed bomb in humanity? A hidden threat I couldn't see? Hmm... Which field though, Shang, the biology? Or medical biology?

Asked Ye Chong sincerely to Lecturer Shang.

"Ts..." Shang lost the mood to tease, as he sounded depressed, "Ye... How could man live without a woman?" His words were coated with oily tears, "How could a man still be a man without woman? Biology? Medical biology? Screw those stupid pigs! I had never ever heard of this crap in my life. How would this be related with biology or medical biology? Ye, this is instinct, the nature of humanity! Nature! Instinct! Do you even understand what those words mean? What? You! You are a beast! You are a bloody beast! ..."

Ye Chong did not compute the dramatized words from Shang ... am I not a human? Other than the strange fact that I don't really get muscles, my anatomy looked exactly like a human... but why would Shang say I'm a beast? Gasp... Mu did a better explanation at my inquiries, simple, straightforward and would never be misleading, unlike Shang. I sometimes wish he could speak English.

At least the in-depth discussion worked like a charm. Those difficult wordings from Shang made Ye Chong felt time flew. He did not feel the boredom of anticipation, even if he was good at it. Waiting was never a pleasing experience to anyone.

The spaceship had arrived to pick him up.

It parked right at the outside of the Sanctuary. A pale green spaceship it was. It did not have a metallic texture, it looked more like a spaceship made out of plants. The design of the spaceship struck Ye Chong however, as it looked similar to Gliding Joy he had designed for full speed before, just that it was much bigger in size, not as narrow as Gliding Joy. The placement of the engine was also different, it was installed at the end of the spaceship, unlike Gliding Joy which had its engine at the front.

It was a kind of miniature spaceship and it could take on 3 passengers at most. A meaty man hopped off the cabin and walked towards Ye Chong and Yan, "May I ask, which one of you is Mr. Ye Chong?" Ye Chong observed the man quietly as he made remarks regarding his physique. No doubt the body was of top quality and had undergone systematic training. His eyes were sharp, he should be a man in combats. Ye Chong was right. Inside this miniature spaceship there were two other men, one being the pilot and mechanic, the other being combat squad member for security enforcement.

"Me," answered Ye Chong briefly.

The buffed man was slightly astonished by Ye Chong's appearance. He took a glance and the apparent age was surprising to him. But he reacted professionally, "Greetings, Mr. Ye Chong." He reached his hand out politely, "I am sent by the Sanctuary to escort you to the venue for the Level 5 Trial." He gestured next, "Please get on board now."

"Okay." Ye Chong nodded and he stepped into the spaceship right away.

The beefy man rolled into the cabin and got into his position. He made a nod to the pilot and the spaceship zoomed into the sky.

The man had hardly spoken a word with Yan Bingxuan back on the ground.

Ye Chong got to his seat and took a look around the interior of

the spaceship. It was rather cramped for a spaceship. There was no window for one to check the outside. To preserve the space, there seemed to be nothing else than some basic facilities inside the spaceship. No adornment, no fancy speaker, no tray, no bar.

Ye Chong estimated the maximum distance the spaceship could travel and calculated the success rate of hi-jacking and escaping with the ship. "Negative," he concluded, the spaceship was solely for short distance travel and it could not perform a space warp apparently. And he could never leave the Orbits without using the space warp mechanism.

Well, does that mean the venue of the trial is pretty close to the Orbits? The Sanctuary actually sent a miniature spaceship to pick me up? Wondered Ye Chong soundlessly, as according to what he was aware of, there was no sound base nearby for a spaceship to stop by!

Then where the heck are we heading to?

Chapter 150: Onto the Nast!

The spaceship travelled steadily. "Shang... Shang!" Called Ye Chong in his mind, "Check out the course we are traveling... and detect the surrounding while you are at it!" exhorted Ye Chong.

"What..." yawned Shang.

"Don't worry. Already doing it. Don't have to remind me," spoke Shang slothfully.

The two men from the Sanctuary had presented excellent discipline. They had not even uttered a word ever since Ye Chong got in. So Ye Chong decided to close his eyes and have his mind rested for the moment.

They had already traveled for 30 minutes. The pilot was indeed outstanding at his skills. The spaceship traveled in consistent stability and the orbit did not fluctuate just because it was an easily-flipped miniature spaceship.

"Yawn..." Shang's voice came laboriously, "Ye, there's a major spaceship coming ahead. Would you like to hear more about it?"

Ye Chong could feel the obvious deceleration of the spaceship right at that moment. "Hmm." he pondered and replied, "Never mind. Just keep an eye on it. Shang, do you notice anything peculiar of that ship?"

"Peculiar? What do you expect? A ship filled with lassies? Wait, let me scan this ship and... Hm?" Shang choked his word out of sudden.

"What was it?" Ye Chong was shocked.

"This spaceship is in-built with jammers. My signals were all dispersed and I could not perform any kind of detection. The armor of the spaceship was made out of strange metals too. Ye, have a nice trip and good luck. Heh!" Shang acted helpless as he stated. Even though there was no screen to view Shang's

expression, Ye Chong did somehow have an urge to punch this metallic junk back to Trash Planet. But of course it was just an urge, there was always a time and place for that but not now, simply not now. Their difference in strength was still there, Ye Chong understood that this would be just another round of Shang flaunting his strength if he would ever raise his fist.

"Ye, we are heading into the inside of the spaceship." He might be a joker, but he still informed Ye Chong everything he detected.

Ye Chong felt the inertia not too long later. The spaceship jerked and stopped.

"Mr. Ye, you may get off board now," invited the beefy man on the assistant pilot seat.

He got off the ship and took a glance at where he was.

As what Shang had stated before, this should be the interior of the spaceship. He landed on a dock apparently. Its full metallic texture emphasized its steadiness and security. There were numerous other platforms at the same axis of his. And every platform was connected with a metallic bridge about a size that could fit two persons. At the other end of the bridge there lay a round pale green sealed gate.

The moment Ye Chong got off the ship, he spotted a lady standing by the bridge. And of course... "Ye! Ye! Ye!" The signature Shang's commentary began... with his dramatic hurrah out of amazement, "Wowie, would you look at that Ye? It's a beauty! Quick, move your stupid eyes there! It's a beauty standing there and she wants you to check her out! I never knew there would be a beauty on a metallic cold ship like this! I'm such a fortunate one! My life is completed! Gosh! Oh seniorita... Tsk, tsk, tsk, look at that, Ye, look at that! That well-sculptured face of hers, that expressive eyes of hers, that curvy-as-her-body nose of hers, that sparkling cherry lips of hers, that wavy glossy hair of hers. Mhm, mhm, mhm! This should be a gentle, loving sweetie! Ye, let me tell

you, a lass like this would be the best for marriage. Look at that extra THIC-

Ye Chong's mind: > Ignore

The very first moment Shang shrieked, he decided to shut down his senses. Sometimes he really wondered if Shang would state someone being a beauty as long as that someone was biologically a female. Ye Chong tried to check this girl out with his viewpoint.

I'll pass. This is not a female in combats. That was the first conclusion he got after a glance.

The arms were slender and tender as hell, like the twirling noodles he saw in the hot pot back then. He seriously doubted if those arms could take 10% of his usual strength. There were no callus... no cuts... While for the physique, it was completely covered under that oversized one piece of hers, so Ye Chong could not tell. Her long hair reached her waist, waving as she moved. No fighter would have the hair this long. This would be dangerous in combats, it could even kill them! And her posture, what's with her posture? She was standing with her hands crossed in front of her body. Any sane fighter would keep their hands always at the sides, letting it down naturally so they could react to any sort of casualties in time. That oversized one piece was a failure, it did not benefit the combats. Most fighters would prefer tights instead.

"Good day, Mr. Ye. Welcome on board to Nast. I am Wei Xi, your attendant. I'll be taking care of your everything before the Level 5 Trial. May you have a good trip," bowed Wei Xi, she looked serene but Ye Chong could see the shock flashing in her eyes the moment she saw him.

"I see. Thank you," nodded Ye Chong as he replied monotonously.

Shang should be having short-circuits in his system, "Oh... Zzzt my Zzzt ... That voice! That angelic voice!"

"It's my pleasure to serve you sir. Please follow me," beamed Wei Xi at Ye Chong, she turned away and walked towards the sealed gate in pale green. Ye Chong followed her closely.

A corridor was behind the gate. It was a long corridor lit all the way to the end by a row of white lights on the ceiling. It looked quite refreshing for some reason.

Wei Xi gradually slowed her steps and let Ye Chong walk by her side.

She turned her face to Ye Chong, "I simply did not expect Mr. Ye to be this young." Dimpled as she spoke on, "It was surprising to me."

"Oh," flatly Ye Chong's reply came, "really?" His expression was unchanged.

"Well, yes. Other than the doctor we attended last time for the trial, the rest of the applicants were of age above 30. From my observation, Mr. Ye, you should be not even 20 I suppose? Yet you have the courage to face the Level 5 Trial. Impressive!" Wei Xi nailed her awe perfectly.

"Oh? Really?" Ye Chong still was nonchalant.

"Oh? Oh?!" Shrieked Shang inside him, "Gosh, Ye, is this your way to reply a lassie?"

"Mr. Ye, could you tell me what your occupation is?" she asked out of curiosity.

He staggered out of sudden. Which occupation should I say...? Pilot? Modification technician? Mech mechanic? Chemist? Skeleton Artisan? I think I had quite a lot of titles in hand...

Somehow Wei Xi sensed the hesitation and inconvenience from Ye Chong's reaction, "Well, if you are not comfortable to mention it, it's okay, really!" She waved her hands, signing she was fine.

"Skeleton Artisan." After a moment of consideration, he picked

Skeleton Artisan.

"Skeleton... Artisan? Such a strange occupation, Mr. Ye. I had never heard of it before. But it sounded amazing," Wei Xi expressed her adoration again.

Wow, she could know I'm great by my words? Ye Chong took an odd gaze at the female before him. Weird, very weird indeed!

Sensed the gaze from Ye Chong, Wei Xi quickly lowered her head. Soon her face was completely red, of scarlet that could drip sweats like her blood.

He did not understand the whole situation... but he did not have the interest to further investigate it. He withdrew his gaze and went back to looking at the front.

"Such a cute, adorable lassie! I like it!" And Ye Chong was wondering if Shang could break through the space-time continuum and jumped out from the alternate dimension without the keystone, judging by the amount of excitement in his words.

They held their conversation and walked on together.

They hit the end of the corridor and was faced by another sealed gate. Unlike the gate before, this gate required identity verification.

"Oh?" Wei Xi seemed to have noticed something while both Ye Chong and she stood by the gate, waiting for it to open, "A moment please!" As she realized that it was her mistake, she ran to the door and performed verification.

Beep. Identity Verified. Gate Opening.

"Please," she lowered her body as she gestured Ye Chong to make his entry.

After the gate there was a foyer inside. Under the hemispherical dome numerous sets of table-and-chair were placed. To Ye Chong's surprise, they were all made out of wood. A cabinet sat at one

corner of the wall contained various beverages.

Contrary to the emptiness Ye Chong expected, there were quite a number of people in there. Two to three of them sat together on one set of furniture. They were either drinking silently or exchanging conversation softly. The foyer was so quiet that Ye Chong could imagine Shang's scream shattering the glasses.

No doubt Ye Chong's arrival had attracted the attention of people around. And simultaneously all of them looked surprised in their eyes. This should be because of my age... I think. He took a glance and as expected, the guests consisted of elderlies. No wonder he became the center of attention at the foyer. Ye Chong did notice there were a few bulky men in their thirties among the group of guests however. Judging by their physiques, they had to be the combat squad members.

Under the guidance of Wei Xi, Ye Chong reached one seat at the corner and sat down.

"Mr. Ye." Briefed Wei Xi softly, "You would be led to your room a moment later. The ship would take about 13 days to arrive at its destination. The guests around you are like you, they are the participants for the Level 5 Trial as well. Should you have any request, please inform me. If it was within my capabilities, I would fully assist you in fulfilling your kindest request. I must also inform you however, for your own safety and the best traveling experience, kindly treat the other candidates with courtesy and keep a distance from them, considering how some of them could be potentially shady characters. If you ever felt your life being threatened or your routine had been put under dispute, kindly contact me. Should you have any form of conflicts with the other candidates, please be informed that both you and your counterpart would be disqualified immediately and you might be severely punished under the terms of the Sanctuary."

Demurely her lips grooved as she mentioned all precaution as well as rules and regulations in one go.

Ye Chong responded with an approving nod, while analyzing the information he had gotten from Wei Xi. She said 13 days, that means the destination should be very distanced away... Well she might be bluffing to confuse the passengers, to mislead them so that they could not figure out the exact location of the venue. Apparently the crew did not intend to let us know our location. Too bad the ship was installed with jammers and Shang could not bypass them somehow.

"The f*ck did you say!"

"So what? Loser!"

Right at this moment, quarrels were heard nearby as two passengers were standing against each other.

Their argument became louder and they sounded extremely angered by each other. Not too long later, they lifted their fists, initiating to fight.

The other passengers evacuated themselves hurriedly as they did not want to be involved in this.

Wow.

Ye Chong was interested to watch an actual combat between the experts. He was astounded by the skills. Their techniques were of superior standards. Ye Chong could not imagine himself fighting against them. His skills were much inferior compared to these real deals.

So this is the standard of a Level 5 candidate? Ye Chong started to treat this trial seriously.

"Oh dear..." knotted Wei Xi's brows as she pulled out the communicator at her side and mumbled a few words.

Chapter 151: Mentalist-Pilot! Perks Demonstrated!

"Freeze!" A team of men barged into the room through the other sealed door at the side. "Nobody moves!" From the uniform Ye Chong could distinguish them as the official combat squad members. Battle tights for all 10 men bumping in. Ten? Ye Chong was astounded. He was oddly sensitive to the number as that was a figure for standard squad of the Sanctuary.

The two candidates engaged in their fight did not notice the 10 armed men at all. Both of them wielded similar strength and they were so hooked up with their brawl that it could cost a bloodshed at any mistake for the moment. They should be in their thirties or forties, the age of perks of their entire life. They were great fighters too. Their techniques were highly refined and gradually the fists got real. The mere quarrel over a disagreement had developed into a flesh-shredding assault.

Wow...

Ye Chong inhibited the overjoyed self inside him, as his widened eyes glued at the action before him. He simply would not want to miss any detail of this exchange of fists. His fighting skills remained as crude and very intuitive. Most of his victories solely depended on his overwhelming speed and strength. If he would be fighting the real deal like Instructor Hak and Feng Su, he would find his movements restricted and be under manipulation of the others. He would love to learn from these successors but... Instructor Hak's techniques were unique to the Black Covers. They were very bizarre and Ye Chong could not learn by just glimpsing at the records without an official teacher to teach him; while Feng Su's techniques had encompassed the application of the psychic power exclusive to the Mentalists. He did steal a few methodologies from Mr. Yin, however even the fundamental

meditation was costing his life to put on. So in the end, in spite of the epic fights with them, he learned not much from the experience.

The two men in front of him were different nevertheless. The stances of defense and offense were clearly structured, the actions were concise and reasonably sequenced, which caught Ye Chong's eyes. He kept imagining how he would pull off those moves himself.

Wei Xi standing at the side with her hands folded sent a glance at Ye Chong's face.

Oh yeah! "Shang! Shang!" Ye Chong remembered something as he hurriedly called Shang, "Quick, record everything you saw through me. We would analyze it later. Sigh, how could I forget this?" His tone was filled with reproach.

"Yawn..." Shang's voice was laid-back, "Am I a no-brainer like you? I had already started rolling the tape centuries ago. Ye, how many times must I-"

Okay, that's all I need to hear.

Ye Chong had one less thing to worry about. He then shifted his attention back to the action at the foyer. The remaining lines from Shang were automatically disregarded.

The squad members came in and formed a circle to separate the innocents and the two fighting men. They kept the men at the circle and stayed still.

The men were still enjoying their fights apparently, as their actions became more brutal over the time. The scene seemed to have gotten grimmer than before. Ye Chong was so mesmerized by the sequence.

At that while when Ye Chong was bewitched by the sounds of fists crashing, the squad members finally took action.

Two of them at each side weaved towards the center of the hall.

Like lightning they rushed towards each other. It happened like a whirlwind as they turned into two beams of gray silhouettes. They crossed over each other and returned to fill in the gap they had left out.

It was so fast that most people would assume they were seeing things.

The fists stopped, the kicks ceased. The two men were as if frozen at the center, their actions were paused, like a sudden glitch in a theater.

It was dead silent at the foyer.

Creepy... It was creepy.

The pause lasted for 2 seconds then they fell onto the ground. They passed out, though Ye Chong could not tell if they were still alive.

The dramatic collapsed alarmed everyone in the hall, including Ye Chong.

But unlike the others in the foyer, Ye Chong saw everything through his eyes.

Right when both of the silhouettes overlapped each other, his eyes squeezed drastically as his pupils exerted a fine beam of glance of great focus! Wei Xi who had been watching the happening did not seem to notice Ye Chong's strange eyes.

Horrifying. The two members must be the mentalists. A simultaneous sequence performed without prompt communication, of such rapport and such accurate grasp of timing, no one else than the mentalists could have done it!

The crossing point of the silhouettes was none other than the very center between the brawls of those men, since that was the point where the intensity was condensed, they had at least exchanged punches and kicks 10 times a second.

The timing when both mentalists got to each other flawlessly happened to be the split second when the two men withdrew their fists and legs! Within the distance barely a meter, the two mentalists crossed each other with their backs rubbing against. Ye Chong could clearly see the closest part they got together was no more than a centimeter.

Technically at that crossing point, one mentalist launched his knees at the abdomen while the other made a slam at the neck with his palm. The entire sequence of action happened in milliseconds!

Ye Chong tried to calm himself, his expression changed back to normal and Wei Xi shifted her sight back onto Ye Chong.

The two mentalists walked out of the circle with two unconscious men in their arms. The team eventually removed themselves from the foyer. Without a single bit of unnecessary noises, the foyer got back its dining pleasure. "Mhm, all done, it's alright now! Mr. Ye," stated Wei Xi as she smiled at Ye Chong, "This foyer is mainly for social activities or a place for candidates to pass their times, but somehow people mistook fighting as a kind of social activity. Hehehe, Mr. Ye, would you like to stay here or would you like to move to your room at the moment?"

"To my room," replied Ye Chong.

Ye Chong's room was Room 508. It was not spacious but it contained a range of facilities. Ye Chong stepped into the room, "Ye, be careful. The room has eyes," reminded Shang.

"Got it. Mhm." Ye Chong did not feel surprised of such extra implementation in the room. It would be more of a surprise to him if the room did not have security cameras in the first place.

"Well, this is it. Mr. Ye, this would be your room for the rest of your trip. There is a processor containing the manuals of all facilities in the room. An instruction manual for example, you could take a look after this. If you have any doubts in mind, you could always ask me. The communicator in you room is directly

connected to mine. We are glad to serve you at any time!" bowed Wei Xi to Ye Chong again as she detailed the services.

"Thank you," Ye Chong also returned a bow to her. Well, the beast knew some basic courtesy at least. Of course, Shang shared a major credit in this for being proactively instilling him the humanity.

The room was dim. On top of a wooden antique table the very symbol of technological advancement, the processor sat, which the contrast was a little awkward to behold. The processor was connected to a communicator at the side.

...

Behind the table, an elderly in pale green garb was seated. And he was watching the visual showing up on the communicator, where Wei Xi was being projected.

"Tell me about this new applicant. You were at his service, you should know something about him I assume?" The elderly's voice was deep and a little hoarse, his eyes were murky with occasional sparkles which would alert the people upon sighting. Anyone could have told that he was a mentalist from his clothing. His tone was calm yet a strong sense of authority of a higher-up could be felt.

"Yes sir, my pleasure," bowed Wei Xi in the hologram as she started pondering and recalling the moments she shared with Ye Chong, it took her a bit to piece everything together, "The applicant is very young... about 20 years old... as fit as a fiddle, though he was a little thin. He was even-tempered, cold to people, less of a talker and he was tenacious... From his reactions thus far, I could say he showed little interest towards lust and seduction. Mhm... he might have some backgrounds unknown to us. He did not seem like an active, impulsive youngster that I have known of. Very different."

"I see... I see... Looks like you have quite a remark for him." The elderly exerted bit of attention.

"Yes, certainly. I feel something utterly different of this person. I also doubted something..." Wei Xi paused a little while, "He could be an ace in combats or he should have an equivalent quality of offenses. He could even have a very rich experience in fights or wars..."

"I see!" The elderly was very interested, "I heard he's a Skeleton Artisan, then how did he become an ace in combats as you have mentioned? What did you spot that made up such speculation from you?"

"Well..." Wei Xi quickly replied, "Once he got off spaceship, the first thing he did was observing the area. It was a very careful observation too. The first glance he set upon me was as if I was his prey or something. Those glances were sharp, only after my introduction, the glance got gentler. I think he realized that I showed no hostility. Besides, the way he walked and the way he placed his hands, the behaviors, every single part of his gave me feelings of a fighter. I'm not sure if it was out of his habits or mere coincidence, during the conflict happened in the resting area today, he portrayed immense enthusiasm towards the brawling. He was intensely attentive the entire time. Combining all of the clues mentioned, I suspected he could be an ace in combats."

The absolute beauty was stately as her voice went strong, which was totally different from her demure sweetie self who spoke softly to Ye Chong before.

"Mhm. You did a splendid job I must say," nodded the elderly approvingly, "I did not foresee that young man being this unique. Yes, yes, yes, please keep an eye on him. Report to me if anything happens."

"Yes, sir," bowed Wei Xi.

The hologram disintegrated into fickle glimmers in the air, scattered and fading away like fireworks. The statue of the elderly sat on the chair motionlessly. The only living thing on the statue

was the eyes of his which blinked occasionally.

...

Ye Chong spent the following days literally rooted in his room. He hardly left his room for activities outside, which forced Wei Xi to pay him several visits daily. She was ever-ready at his service, with the enchanting smile and considerate nature of hers, which was a barrel of triggers to boil Shang's fuel as he kept breathing heavily like he was on drugs or something.

In spite of her kindness, Ye Chong remained stoned in his room. Wei Xi found him eccentric as how a young man like him could stay in the room the whole day while showing zero interest towards the opposite gender. "This is too weird..." she muttered while standing before the monitor. These few days she had been watching Ye Chong over the monitor. She was aware of Ye Chong's routine. Ye Chong would spend everyday at the processor, viewing a variety of design plans she could not comprehend. He seemed to be meditating on something. "No way," she mumbled as she recalled how she had tried showing these plans to other members on the ship and people had been telling her those were plans of commonly seen mechs in the market. There was nothing particular with them. They were worthless.

Plans for commonly seen mech? Nothing particular? Worthless? Then why is he spending everyday viewing them?

Or he had found out that I was watching him the whole time? That's why he acted... The deduction flashed in her mind.

So she spent the next few days visiting more frequently than before... but nothing special had happened.

But was Ye Chong really dazing at the worthless design plans days and nights the whole time?

Chapter 152: Nine Gates of Daylight

Ye Chong blinked.

The two people fighting aggressively on the holographic screen, with very quick movements, were the two from that day! Ye Chong knitted his brows as he played the video repeatedly, trying to uncover every single detail of the fight, analyzing their attacks and defenses.

If it were up to Mu, he could do this faster and present a more complete and logical assessment. However, Ye Chong understood that the results from his own effort would be more valuable than Mu's.

Shang had hacked the room's surveillance system, and what Wei Xi saw through the surveillance video was only a short recording of Ye Chong's image by Shang. The mech had put some effort into this cover, for he must ensure that the video remained largely unchanged, except for some minor details. For example, Ye Chong's expression, the schematics on display and so on, were changed occasionally to make the effect more realistic.

Every time Wei Xi visited Ye Chong's room, she did not discover what Ye Chong was really doing due to Ye Chong's astoundingly sharp hearing. Wei Xi was not a combatant, and her footsteps could be heard from afar by Ye Chong. Every time Wei Xi came to Ye Chong's room, Ye Chong would have been prepared with the schematics on his desk, and a thoughtful expression on his face.

For a full 13 days, Ye Chong did not step out of the room, and Wei Xi found that the schematics Ye Chong had been studying was changed three times.

Ye Chong's battle skills were mainly of the basic superficial principles he learned at Black Cove, without any complete logical basis. The duo's battle recording was dissected by Ye Chong into a thousand details, as Ye Chong tried to find some pattern in it. It

was undeniable that both of them were very skilled, and Ye Chong believed that, in terms of skills, they were roughly on the same level as the average mech pilots from Black Cove.

However, any patterns in their battle could not be identified easily. Ye Chong could only mimic their movements for now, since he found their battle moves more powerful, more difficult to predict, or would increase his overall strength!

As for their easy defeat against two mentalist pilots, Ye Chong was quite surprised. To him, they were both on about the same level as Black Cove mech pilots in terms of battling skills, but they were still easily brought down. In terms of combat, no matter between humans or mechs, Black Cove was definitely far better than the Sanctuary. For two Black Cove level combatants to be defeated in a few moves by two mentalist pilots, the outcome was odd for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong brought his confusion to Shang.

Shang replied immediately, "That's quite normal, perfectly understandable given the circumstances. Ye, think about it, those two mentalists were ambushing, and the two idiots were still engaged in a fight. Tsk tsk, Ye, if the person before you is about the same level as you, and fighting you to the death, do you think you'll have time to watch out for other enemies?"

Ye Chong shook his head.

"There you have it. Those two fellows were obviously roughly equal in strength. As they were deep in battle, someone attacked from behind their backs, and that's absolutely normal! Besides, if you think about it, what's the unique ability of mentalist pilots? Hmm, sigh, this, I'm actually not quite sure of this, but it should be some kind of clairvoyance ability, tsk tsk, Ye, that's an ability that best complements an ambush. You saw what happened that day, that golden opportunity taken, tsk tsk, splendid indeed!" Shang spoke enthusiastically, his emotions high, but he then

sobered up and said, "If it's one on one though, hehe, it's hard to say who will win!"

"That makes sense!" Ye Chong carefully thought through Shang's words and felt relieved.

Shang noticed that Ye Chong seemed eager to chat with him, and swiftly began on the one topic he's most interested in, "Ye, what do you think of Xi Xi'er?"

"Xi Xi'er? Who's that?" Ye Chong did not recall knowing anyone called Xi Xi'er.

"Sigh, you're such a dumb*ss, it's the nickname of our most beloved Wei Xi!" Shang sounded intoxicated, and Ye Chong felt like he was getting goosebumps.

"Not good at all!" To completely reject Shang's obsession, Ye Chong replied with firm determination.

"Not good at all? Sigh, I've forgotten that you're a wild animal! Asking that question to you is like asking for directions from the blind. Our dear Ye's favorite is that white-robed violent woman! Hehe, that passionate kiss, oh, wait, I should call it a lick, has let our little Ye experience true emotions for the first time, hehe, but that kick was too cruel ..." Shang was laughing more and more lasciviously.

Ye Chong knew that if he were to argue with Shang right then, it would only excite the bored Shang even more, so he opted rationally for ignorance.

However, Ye Chong's mind could not help but think back of that snow white training garb, although the imposing and inviolable face was gradually becoming out of focus. Only the white training garb remained clear as day in Ye Chong's mind.

"Sigh, what am I thinking all of this for? It's all that d*mn Shang's fault, I still prefer Mu! Hmm, counting back, it's about time for Mu to come out, Mu must now still be analyzing that

recording underneath!"

Shang's words were thoroughly ignored by Ye Chong, as his thought began to wonder somehow, from the past to present, through battle after battle, meeting people after people. Images and figures from the past came to mind like a dream, and for a moment, he felt a little dazed.

Finally, on the sixth day of the flight, throughout which Shang continued blabbering on, Mu finally came out. Ye Chong could finally have some peaceful silence! Once Mu came out, he discussed the results of his analysis with Ye Chong. Ye Chong also presented his own analysis, and they both exchanged their opinions on the matter.

In the next seven days of the journey, Ye Chong benefited very much! Mu's analysis results were the main reason for that. Mu's database had a good volume of information on kinematics and combat, which made his logical analysis unquestionable. Unlike Mu's typical statistical analysis, Ye Chong's analysis may be incomplete or even inaccurate, but he still had some rather unique insights. If a master in combat were here, he would definitely approve of Ye Chong's intuition! However, Ye Chong did not understand that concept, as he could only vaguely sense that certain alternatives would be better than others. As for Mu, he was only focusing on the analysis results.

However, these were only theories. Theoretical understanding and application were two different things. Without proper training, the body could not remember the movements, and with large variation in the enemy's moves, it would not only reduce one's capabilities, but also present an opportunity for the enemy. It seemed that he had a new training course now! Fortunately, Ye Chong never complained of too many training courses.

It was only a pity that the time and location did not allow him to begin with this training.

Wei Xi looked at Ye Chong through the surveillance device. The man never left the room, and even had her send him his meals. No matter how she looked at it, he was a thoroughly obsessed scientist, and should not pose a threat. Nonetheless, why did she feel that something was wrong? Wei Xi frowned, her delicate profile tinged with vexation.

Nast finally docked, and this meant that the moment of truth was near! In truth, Ye Chong had thought of hijacking Nast in this period. With Guardian and Mu, Ye Chong believed that the probability of success was high. However, even if he hijacked Nast, he still could not leave the Orbits. Without the Orbits' star map, he could not even know where he was and hence, could not do a warp jump. Leaving the Orbits would be impossible.

On the thirteenth day, the starship finally reached its destination.

Under Wei Xi's guidance, Ye Chong left the ship.

Ye Chong took one step across the ledge of the cabin's door, and his eyes automatically swept across the view in front of him. Abruptly, as though struck by lightning, he stood frozen and his eyes glowed in stupefaction!

Heavens! What was this place?

Before him was a dream-like metropolis!

From afar, the city's silhouette seemed like a scale model right in front of Ye Chong, giving a feeling of surrealism. Skyscrapers rose in all kinds of shapes under the illumination of dazzling artificial lighting, reflecting off glaring halos. One could not help but gasp in amazement at the sight. The buildings were massive, some shaped like large honeycombs, others like towers; while they came in a variety of designs, the one thing they share in common was their soaring heights. Blue Ocean Academy's 800-storey main building would fit in perfectly. Unlike the natural refreshing style that Ye Chong saw in other places in the Orbits, the buildings here were all

in modernistic and metallic fashion. The Five Galaxies' most popular and common high-tech vibe permeated every corner of this world.

Ye Chong could not see the sky, since above him was an endless stretch of light blue metallic ceiling, reaching all the way to the horizon. The ceiling was equipped with numerous artificial lights. This place did not look dim at all; the world was bright as day.

Countless mechs flew swiftly across the sky, like a dense swarm of bees returning to their nests, casting many vague shadows on the ground.

Ye Chong smelled an earthly scent. Could this be underground? Ye Chong's thoughts began to run wild, as he was shook like a storm was inside him. How much had the Sanctuary's technology really advanced?

Behind him was the docked Nast starship. Nast was a large ship, a truly massive structure. Here, however, it looked tiny. Ye Chong found that many of the docked starships here were about the same size as Nast, although some of them were even larger. Numerous engineering mechs were busying themselves around in an orderly fashion.

He was now probably at the city's docking station. Ye Chong even had a sinister thought - if he destroyed a starship here, would it have a domino effect?

"Welcome to Nine Gates of Daylight!" Wei Xi's sweet and mellow voice was tinged with pride.

Chapter 153: Blue Sandstone

He knew from Wei Xi that the city did not have restrictions on activity time, so Ye Chong decided to make a grand tour of the almost miraculous underground city. After declining Wei Xi's company, Ye Chong headed for the streets alone. Usually, he would not be in the mood for a stroll in the city, but Nine Gates of Daylight had irrevocably made him curious. A massive underground metropolis like this, Ye Chong believed, would never have been possible in the Five Galaxies. Ye Chong himself had never imagined for there be such a city in this world. On the other hand, no matter the time, familiarizing himself with the environment was enough to significantly raise his chance of survival. This was according to Ye Chong's experience.

Witnessing the miraculous existence of Nine Gates of Daylight, Ye Chong began to have doubts on whether he could pass the so-called five Trials, for the Sanctuary's strength was truly unpredictable!

Every candidate had to wear a silver electronic wristband once they left their ship. Its matted internal surface made for a comfortable wear. Its smooth surface of gleaming silver was etched with patterns of intertwining vines, and between the leaves of these vines, Ye Chong found many holographic projection apertures. Wei Xi said that this was a travel pass for Nine Gates of Daylight. Without it, moving throughout the city would be difficult, and his personal safety would not be guaranteed. As for how it would "not be guaranteed", Wei Xi only smiled and moved on to another topic.

Ye Chong found that wristband could not be taken off once it was put on. Wei Xi's explanation was that it prevented any accidental loss of the item. Ye Chong, however, did not buy it at all. Wei Xi also warned Ye Chong to never attempt to remove the wristband, or it would be very dangerous. Similarly, she did not elaborate any

further on how it could be "dangerous".

Of course, Ye Chong was not foolish enough to believe that this was only a simple travel pass. Just as he laid sight on the wristband, Mu's superior scanning system had already gone through the entire item. When Mu informed the scanning results to Ye Chong, Ye Chong could only force himself to maintain an acceptably normal expression as he was given the wristband.

It had a signal tracking feature, allowing the Sanctuary to know at all times the whereabouts of the wearer. There was also an unknown liquid inside, mixed with more than 300 extremely tiny alloy needles. Next to the liquid was an extremely potent high explosive material. Mu concluded that this material could explode and wipe out anything within a three meter radius. The probability of this was much higher than the material being a tasty beverage. Based on Mu's calculations, the explosion would cause the alloy needles submerged in the liquid to shoot outwards in all directions, being effective up to a thirty meter radius. The explosive decision was similarly controlled by the Sanctuary. It meant that, whoever wearing this item would place their lives in the hands of the Sanctuary.

Ye Chong received the seemingly elegant wristband as he listened to Mu analyzing all the various functions of the item, and grew anxious inside!

However, seeing Wei Xi and an entire standard combat squad of mech pilots eyeing him with hostility, Ye Chong could only brace himself and put on the terrifying item on his left wrist. If he did not cooperate, he would probably be surrounded and attacked. Besides, there were many of the Sanctuary's pilots around here. Since he left the starship, Ye Chong noticed keenly that there were more than ten of the Sanctuary's combat squads flying in the air! If he were attacked here, there would not be much of him left in the end!

Wei Xi was secretly pleased. No matter what troubles Ye Chong

could bring, once he put on the travel wristband, he would never escape the Sanctuary's grasp. They would not have to fear for any of his tricks.

After Ye Chong put on the silver wristband, the squad of mech pilots behind Wei Xi left silently.

Ye Chong made the excuse of wanting to look around the place, and quickly left Wei Xi. Wei Xi was not afraid of Ye Chong being up to something, and agreed smilingly.

Ye Chong turned and immediately asked Mu urgently, "Mu, can you take care of this?" Ye Chong hated the feeling of having his fate being controlled by someone else.

Mu was silent for a moment before saying, "Ye, this design of theirs is quite delicate, I'll need some time!"

Ye Chong could not help but exhale in relief. He had an almost blind confidence towards Mu's abilities. If Mu did not say it was impossible, then Ye Chong believed that Mu would be able to do it. In truth, ever since their meeting on the trash planet, Mu had never let Ye Chong down. However, even the usually undaunted Mu had requested for more time. This showed how advanced Sanctuary's technology really was.

Ye Chong calmly began his solo exploration of the metropolis known as Nine Gates of Daylight.

It was only by entering Nine Gates of Daylight that one could truly appreciate its magnificence. Walking leisurely along the streets, Ye Chong found the city's prosperity surprising. He had thought that the place was like a man-made base, but along the streets Ye Chong discovered that it was complete with various facilities. This was undeniably a real city.

Unlike the rushed pace of the pedestrians Ye Chong had seen in other cities, the people here seemed to be leisurely walking and looked carefree. Ye Chong also noticed something curious - most of

the pedestrians he saw were middle aged, and there were basically no one as young as he was. Nonetheless, the people on the streets had all looked at him oddly, and Ye Chong did not understand why, though he did not really mind them.

The skies were much livelier than on the ground. Numerous mechs cruised between the skyscrapers, dangerously close to each other, but the mech pilots all displayed extremely well piloting skills. The common sight of newbie pilots flying their mechs uncertainly across the skies was absent in Nine Gates of Daylight. Ye Chong was suspected that they could be having some sort of mech piloting competition.

In a small store on the roadside, through an organic sheet of glass, many mechs were put on display. Ye Chong could not help but stop in his tracks. The holographic advertisement at the door wrote, 'Blue Sandstone Mech Store - Mechs Made To Order, with Modification, Assembling and Reparation Services'.

Ye Chong stared. What a huge boast. This was the first time Ye Chong had seen an advertisement offering custom made mechs, and even had modification, assembling and reparation services. If this little store could build custom made mechs, it would mean that the store had the facilities to build an entire mech by itself. That seemed preposterous. If it was one of those huge mech production companies displaying this ad, Ye Chong might have believed it, but this was an inconspicuous looking little store. Ye Chong found it hard to believe that it had the facilities to build an entire mech.

Even Ye Chong himself could not build an entire mech. With his most recent success, Han Jia, even though he had made most of the parts by himself, the engine, scanning system and other important parts were not what he could manage. Besides, without Mu's help, building Han Jia would have been more difficult. However, who could possibly have a helper like Mu?

Unintentionally, Ye Chong found himself entering the little store

named Blue Sandstone.

The shop looked inconspicuous on the outside, but it was very spacious inside, with many different mechs on display. Ye Chong examined those mechs in detail, and found to his surprise that they were not in the usual natural style common in the Orbits, but were very similar to the advanced level mechs found in the Five Galaxies. Ye Chong was very familiar with advanced level mechs of all models from the Five Galaxies, and could notice the difference in style.

Suddenly, a soft voice reached him. "Young man, these things are very different from your equipment, don't waste your time on them!" The tone was not very welcoming.

Ye Chong turned to see a middle aged man in a working uniform standing behind him, his body covered in patches of grease, and his expression a little unfriendly. "What did I do to him?" Ye Chong thought to himself. The middle aged man's words meant nothing to him. What did he mean by "your equipment"?

Not understanding his words, Ye Chong had no intention of probing further, but instead studied the modified version of the Eden-IV model before him. Whoever modified it had intended to improve the mech's automotives, and even put on some horizontal stabilizer fins and simplified the design on Eden's originally thickset limbs.

Ye Chong could not help but shake his head.

"This is just a small store, nothing much to see!" Seeing Ye Chong shake his head, the middle aged man made a hostile expression, obviously trying to kick him out.

Ye Chong looked up in surprise. While he had few experiences in buying things, this was the first time he met such a storekeeper.

"How much is this Eden?" Ye Chong pointed to the Eden-IV model before him. This Eden-IV model had good balance, but its

automotive power was regrettably lacking. However, other parts of its design were all aimed for balance. Besides, the mech model had an important advantage, and that was its stability. It had stable performance no matter what the environment. Besides Han Jia, Ye Chong only had Guardian, which cannot ever show itself. He felt the need to have another mech, in case if Han Jia was damaged, he would still have another mech to travel. Moreover, Ye Chong already had an idea on how to modify this Eden model.

"You buying?" The middle aged man looked unconvinced.

"Yes!" Ye Chong nodded.

"You really buying?" The middle aged man's face was full of disbelief.

"Yes!" Ye Chong did not even make the effort of nodding this time.

"Alright, that model's 15 Nine Gate points." The middle aged man gave a look that asked him to pay up if he wanted to buy the mech.

"Nine Gate points?" What is this Nine Gate point? Was it the local currency? Ye Chong suddenly remembered something important - he did not have any local currency.

The middle aged man studied Ye Chong for a moment, and saw the silver wristband on Ye Chong's left wrist. He asked, "You a new candidate?"

Chapter 154: Interim Protocol

"Yes!" Ye Chong nodded.

"Haha, you're a candidate! Ah, it's a total misunderstanding on my part!" The middle aged man fidgeted with his hands, feeling very awkward.

"What did you misunderstand about?" Ye Chong asked.

"Haha." The middle aged man grew more embarrassed. He was going to cover himself with a laugh, but seeing as Ye Chong continued staring unblinkingly at him, he explained awkwardly, "I ... I thought you were from the Sanctuary!"

"From the Sanctuary?" Ye Chong found that odd.

"Yes. Almost all the ones as young as you around here are from the Sanctuary. In all these years, this is the first time I've seen a candidate as young as you!" The middle aged man showed great curiosity towards Ye Chong.

"Why are young people usually from the Sanctuary?" Ye Chong could not see the relationship between being young and being from the Sanctuary.

"All the detainees here are those who passed the Level Three Trial, but did not pass the Level Five Trial. Usually, candidates at this level are aged 35 and above, rarely are they in their twenties. The young people here are usually elites trained by the Sanctuary. That's why I misjudged you earlier!" The middle aged man saw Ye Chong's perplexity and explained patiently.

"Do you not like the Sanctuary's people?" Ye Chong asked directly. While he did not tell the whole story, he could clearly feel the middle aged man's hostility.

"Hmph, the Sanctuary's people? Who among the detainees here would like them?" The middle aged man's expression turned into anger.

This was obviously not a good conversation topic. Ye Chong moved on tactfully, "Then how's you know that I'm an applicant?"

"Hah, that's really easy, it's just that I didn't notice earlier, hehe, or I would've known. Your travel wristband, that's something only we detainees will have on. I've never seen the identification pass for the Sanctuary's people, but I know that they don't wear this thing." The middle aged man laughed, pleased with himself.

"If you don't even know what a Nine Gates point is, then you must be a first time applicant. Hehe, this d*mned place, to those who are not applicants of the Sanctuary's people, they wouldn't be able to get in!" The middle aged man continued on.

"Oh!" Ye Chong realized now.

After studying him for a few moments, the middle aged man said, "Young man, you look like a decent person, so don't walk around idly. You'll most likely end up in Ancient Terminus, so best if you go back and prepare for the Trials. If you manage to pass the Level Three Trial, you'll even get to stay here."

"Ancient Terminus? Where's that?" Ye Chong asked.

"Heavens! Your guide is too irresponsible, how could you not know that? Since when did the Sanctuary's people become so careless?" The middle aged man wore an expression of disbelief.

"I just arrived today, right off the ship." Ye Chong explained.

"No wonder, you're an eager fellow! Hehe, then let me tell you all about it. Of the five Trials, you must start from Level One, and if you can't even pass that, you'll be punished by the Sanctuary. Hmm, as for what that punishment is, I have no idea. If you have passed Level One, but didn't pass Level Three, you'll be sent off to Ancient Terminus. If you passed Level Three but not Level Five, you'll be detained in Nine Gates. Hehe, if you really passed Level Five, you'll be allowed to leave the Orbits, and they'll allocate a starship to send you off. Understand now, young man?" The

middle aged man explained in detail to Ye Chong.

"I see." Ye Chong began to understand the situation, and asked further, "So what is this Nine Gates point?"

"Nine Gate points are points for your service in Nine Gates, and the local currency." The middle aged man said, "For example, that Eden-IV you're looking at is worth five Nine Gate points."

"Hmm." Ye Chong nodded in understanding, the truth not far from what he had guessed.

Just then, the travel wristband on Ye Chong's left wrist made a sharp buzzing sound. Noticing Ye Chong's confused expression, the middle aged man immediately spoke up to Ye Chong, "That's someone calling you! Sigh, how could you come out here without knowing even that? You're a real piece of work! See, that leaf is the connection button!" The middle aged man pointed towards an etched vine leaf beside the holographic projection aperture.

Ye Chong quickly pressed the leaf as instructed by the middle aged man. Beep, a soft sound was heard. An image of Wei Xi immediately appeared above the holographic projection aperture, with Wei Xi's attractive profile shrunk and suspended in the air above the holographic projection aperture as her mellow voice came through, "Mr Ye, please return, there are some changes to the Trials. Please return immediately to the Sanctuary's trial center." Wei Xi was cordial, but allowed no disobedience.

"Er, where's the Sanctuary's trial center?" Ye Chong asked.

Wei Xi recalled then that Ye Chong did not know where the trial center was, and panicked as she fumbled around, bowing a little as she searched using the photon processor before her, her confidence earlier gone without a trace. The middle aged man saw Wei Xi's clumsiness from the side, and sympathized with the misfortune of the delicate young lady to be assigned with such a candidate.

After some long moments, Wei Xi finally lifted her head and recovered her smile as she spoke, "Mm, about that, Mr Ye, here is the exact location of the Sanctuary's trial center!" Wei Xi sent a holographic map marked with the trial center's location.

"Okay!" Ye Chong nodded, and began to look through the holographic map.

The middle aged man could not stand it any longer, and pulled Ye Chong to the door. As the man closed in on Ye Chong, Ye Chong's misgivings for having anyone near him almost made him react reflexively to avoid the man. However, he remembered that Wei Xi was watching, and did not wish to show his true abilities. Besides, the middle aged man was probably not an enemy. With that, Ye Chong suppressed his reflexive reaction and allowed the middle aged man to pull him.

The man's reaction was also a surprise to Wei Xi, in her holographic presence.

As the middle aged man reached the door with Ye Chong, he pointed towards the huge building opposite the street and said to Ye Chong, "I'm truly speechless with the both of you. Look, that's the trial center! Do you really need a map for somewhere so near?"

Wei Xi blushed deeply in the holographic image, but Ye Chong only acknowledged flatly. The middle aged man had enough of Ye Chong, and waved him off, "Now get going!"

Ye Chong replied, "Okay," and left immediately, not realizing that the holographic image with Wei Xi's awkward expression was still present, and swinging along with Ye Chong's left hand.

To prevent another humiliating episode, Wei Xi decided to meet Ye Chong at the entrance of the building.

Ye Chong's room, according to Wei Xi, would be for his perusal during the trials.

Wei Xi spoke with a serious expression, "Mr Ye, due to a special

case this time, the masters who were supposed to manage the trials had other tasks to see to, and so we've decided to fall back on the Fifth Interim Protocol."

"Okay." Ye Chong was seemingly unaffected, with an almost expressionless face. Seeing that Ye Chong did not react with surprise at the news, Wei Xi approved of his mental fortitude, even though his lifelessness also made her furious at the same time.

Wei Xi was an elite non-combatant of the Sanctuary, and quickly noticed her emotional instability. She quietly chastised herself and adopted a more serious expression.

"The Fifth Interim Protocol permits a free lifestyle. For every applicant, the Sanctuary will allocate a proportionate initial capital based on his or her contribution to the Sanctuary in the past. The fund is in Nine Gates points, the local currency, and will reflect your contributions to the Sanctuary. The goal of this Trial is for every applicant to accumulate 1000 points in three months. This means that the final Nine Gates points in your personal account must be 1000 points more than your initial capital.

"Please note that any fraudulent trading in your effort to gain more Nine Gates points is prohibited. Your every transaction is monitored by the Sanctuary. If anyone is found to be engaged in fraudulent trading to gain more Nine Gates points, your candidacy will be revoked, and you will be severely punished!

"Your final Trial result will depend on both the final number of Nine Gates points you earn and the value of the products you created in this duration.

"There are many ways to earn Nine Gates points. One of the most common is to sell products you made to the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary will award you with Nine Gates points based on the value of your products. Another way is to sell your products in the market in exchange for the corresponding value of Nine Gates points. These are the main ways for non-combatants to earn Nine

Gates points.

"However, as a reminder, the quality and creativity of the products you create will make a huge difference on its value! Hence, if possible, focus your efforts on increasing the quality of your products.

"On the other hand, any special formulae and creative ideas or products of yours can be proposed to the Sanctuary, and the Sanctuary will award you with the appropriate number of Nine Gates points. For this option, the Sanctuary's awards are usually very high. If you have any new and unique theories, you can submit them to the Sanctuary. After review and acceptance by our Masters, the amount of Nine Gates points you earn may be high enough to allow you to pass this Trial immediately.

"The difficulty of this Trial is Level Three. If you can, with your own strength, earn 1000 Nine Gates points here in three months, meaning you are able to survive in Nine Gates city. The detainees in Nine Gates are all candidates who passed Level Three Trials. Low quality products have no place in this city. If you wish to accomplish your task, you will have to produce high quality products. This is why we grade this Trial as Level Three.

"If you pass this Trial, you can move on the next one. If you do not pass, we'll study your performance in these three months and send you to Ancient Terminus or give a certain level of punishment.

"Your room's photon processor is directly linked to the market. From there, you can choose your materials. If you can't find them there, you can inform the Sanctuary, and the Sanctuary will do their best to fulfill your request, but the costs will be very high.

"Alright. Since you had provided three interesting mechs to the Sanctuary before, the Sanctuary's award for your contribution translates to an initial capital of ...

Wei Xi looked down at her files, but when she saw the figure, her

bright sparkling eyes immediately turned to a disbelieving stare.

"400 points!" Wei Xi pronounced those few words with great difficulty.

400 points!

For such a huge amount of initial capital to be allocated for such a young man, it was nearly impossible! What sort of mysterious occupation was skeleton carving? How was this expressionless guy special? What sort of mechs did he provide that could amount to a total of 400 points?

Numerous questions came to Wei Xi's mind!

Chapter 155: Trouble

How much was 400 Nine Gates points? Ye Chong was ignorant, but Wei Xi understood clearly. The value of 400 Nine Gates points was the highest initial capital she had ever encountered! More importantly, this was a sign of recognition from the Sanctuary. Three mechs amounting to 400 Nine Gates points meant that each mech was equivalent to about more than a hundred Nine Gates points. Wei Xi did not keep up well with the Nine Gates market situation, but even she knew that some master level products could only reach this value.

If it was an elderly person, Wei Xi would not be so surprised, but the Mr Ye before her was definitely below 20 years of age.

"His occupation must be very special!" thought Wei Xi.

She remembered Ye Chong telling her about him being a skeleton carver. "Hmm, it must be because of that strange occupation of his!" Wei Xi consoled herself. As a non-combatant, she also had her own expertise, but hers was in pharmacy.

What a huge disparity! Even though she was recognized as an elite by her teachers, she understood that her pharmaceutical products would never fetch a price higher than 10 Nine Gates points.

The reality staring in her face had delivered a heavy blow to her! She smiled wryly to herself. "So there are real geniuses out there!"

Ye Chong was not aware of Wei Xi's inner turmoil. Wei Xi gathered herself and taught Ye Chong how to use his travel bracelet, how to check his Nine Gates points and so on. Fortunately, Ye Chong had good memory and picked up the necessary skills quickly, which was a relief for Wei Xi.

After teaching the basics, Wei Xi then introduced some basic information about Nine Gates city before leaving Ye Chong.

Ye Chong finally got a better sense of Nine Gates.

In Nine Gates, there were only two types of residents - one were the people who passed the Level Three Trial but not the Level Five Trial, and the other was the Sanctuary's people. As the storekeeper of the Blue Sandstone had told him, most of the young people here were from the Sanctuary, and Ye Chong guessed that they were probably students or something similar.

Ye Chong was now browsing through market products through his photon processor, since his materials would have to come from there. Unlike the old style found in other places of the Orbits, Nine Gates had its own virtual net, and the market trading system formed part of this virtual world. Ye Chong asked whether Mu could hack the system, but when Mu told him that the probability of being discovered was over 50 percent, Ye Chong immediately dismissed the idea. Of course, he was already surprised by the Sanctuary's solid abilities.

He had thought that Nine Gates was only a city, and their products in the market should not be too varied, but the photon processor's market item lists and product introductions were extensive, and Ye Chong could not help but grew interested as he scrolled through the products.

Ye Chong could not find any skeletons in the market for the moment, but he was not in a hurry. He clicked into a random list of items.

These were mineral ores, many of which Ye Chong did not recognize. He knew next to nothing in ore mineralogy and metallurgy. Fortunately, he had advice from the huge database that was Mu.

"Dual energy ore!" Mu's flat voice suddenly turned up a notch and surprised Ye Chong. However, Ye Chong immediately realized that this was no average material.

Maltese browsed through the mineral ore section

enthusiastically, to see if he could get his hands on anything interesting. As a Nine Gates Sanctuary's mech pilot student minoring in metallurgy, he had stumbled upon an improvement in an alloy material's formula. The Sanctuary had granted him substantial award points. Hence, he was trying to find something interesting in the market.

He scrolled through the items on the photon processor lazily. While the ores offered were not bad, and some were even rare, they were still what the Sanctuary could provide for him, and not worth his points. He shook his head in a sigh. Why wasn't there anything that was worth his attention?

These mineral ores were mostly dug up by some detainees of good quality. However, their education system was far inferior to the internal information of the Sanctuary. Nonetheless, their rich experience allowed them to classify the ores with great accuracy. There were many ores that they had not seen before, but experience and instinct would urge them to keep the ores and sell them at a higher price. Maltese was looking for ores like these. Of course, some of the vendors were only selling because they were in urgent need of the points.

No matter the circumstances, it was rare to find ores like these. Maltese had only succeeded in finding a treasure like this once, which turned out to be a fist-sized core mineral. His success in improving the alloy formula was mainly due to the core mineral. This was what encouraged Maltese in his "quest" for such hidden treasures. The process was one that tested his patience, but Maltese believed he did not lack that particular quality.

Suddenly, Maltese's eyes glowed brightly. An inconspicuous looking gray mineral ore came into his line of sight. Maltese's right hand trembled. Heavens! Was that not a dual energy ore? This was probably one of the top 100 rare minerals in the known universe! Maltese's brain nearly short circuited. Even with the Sanctuary's huge strength and influence, he had never seen a dual energy ore!

After a deep breath, Maltese forced himself to calm down, but the effort was largely wasted.

He reached out with his trembling right hand and made to purchase, but that dual energy ore suddenly vanished from the item list!

Maltese froze, and his face abruptly twisted. He searched through the item list like a mad person, but the dual energy ore was gone without a trace!

For a whole half hour, Maltese searched for the vanished dual energy ore. He had browsed through all the mineral ores, but still could not find it! Maltese finally sagged into his seat, his heart filled with great regret. Why did he not act faster? If he had acted just a little faster, just a little, that dual energy ore would be his!

Just as Maltese was nearly going crazy from his depression, Ye Chong was counting his remaining points. That dual energy ore had cost him an unexpected 200 points! In the blink of an eye, his points had halved in amount.

The miner of the dual energy ore had found that the ore emitted strong energy waves, but did not recognize it. After consulting various experts among the detainees, none of them knew about the ore. He realized that the ore was a rare mineral, but had to sell it since he was in desperate need of points. He priced it at a high 200 points, thinking that if he could not sell it, he would then keep it for his own research. If he could sell it, then he would also earn a good sum.

200 points was equivalent to about 40 Eden mechs! Even though Ye Chong knew the ore was valuable, he was still pained by the large expense!

Mu hastened Ye Chong to quickly scroll through the item list as he explained, "Dual energy ores can be mixed into alloys, resulting in an alloy with enhanced resistance against energy based weapons like laser beams! They're a must for building excellent mech

shields. However, they are very rare, and is one of the most valuable minerals in the universe."

Mu's explanation was a great relief to Ye Chong!

"Stop, Ye!" Mu spoke again.

Maltese may have minored in metallurgy, but he was an outstanding mech pilot, and had good control over his emotions, in which he quickly ended his emotional agitation. He consoled himself, gathered his emotions and restarted his long "quest" for hidden treasures. The item list was constantly refreshing, and new products could always surface at any moment.

Monocrystalline aluminite? Maltese brightened up. Could this be Heaven's way of compensating for his earlier missed opportunity with the dual energy ore? Monocrystalline aluminite may not be as precious as dual energy ore, but it was still a very rare mineral. However, Maltese had seen it before in the Sanctuary's mineral museum. It was a small, clear piece of crystal, much like jewellery.

This particular piece of monocrystalline aluminite looked blemished on the outside, with only a small corner uncovered in transparent crystalline form. Maltese grew excited. Being proficient in mineralogy, he knew that the outside surface was only an associated mineral. Once the mineral layer on the surface was removed, the inside would be clear as crystal. Based on the mass, this piece was at least ten times larger than the one on display in the school mineral museum!

This was an extremely rare piece of large monocrystalline aluminite!

Maltese's eyes shone brightly, overjoyed, and could not help but laugh out loud, "Surely no one will act before me ..."

Before he could finish the sentence, the monocrystalline aluminite on the photon processor suddenly vanished! Maltese's laughter was cut short abruptly. His eyes bulged out and the veins

around his temples throbbed. His expression froze, and he finally gave up, falling backwards in outrage, blood spraying out of his mouth!

Twice he was robbed, and twice he had lost such precious mineral ores. Even if Maltese had good mental endurance, he could no longer suppress the fiery rage in his heart. After vomiting that mouthful of blood, he fell down backwards like a rod.

At the same time, the oblivious Ye Chong was taking in information from Mu. "Monocrystalline aluminite is also a precious mineral, and can enhance an alloy's resilience, improving its physical properties. The most special part about it is that it could enhance an alloy's performance under high temperatures, and so it's a good material for mech engines!"

Ye Chong and Mu conversed as usual, oblivious to the person whom they had exasperated until he fainted! Even if Ye Chong knew, he would not feel guilty, but instead remind himself that he must always act fast! This person would be a living example for not following that rule!

Under Mu's guidance, Ye Chong bought a few more mineral ores. While they were not as precious as the earlier one, they were still rare minerals!

However, Ye Chong quickly realized a very serious problem. His and Mu's lavish spending had quickly exhausted all 400 points! Ye Chong even suspected that Mu had calculated his points and picked the minerals accordingly. He now had no points left, his account as barren as it had been when he first landed in Nine Gates!

Even if he could find any skeletons, he could no longer afford to buy them now!

Chapter 156: First Pot of Gold?

In the pharmaceutical section of listed items for sale, Ye Chong finally found skeletons in the list. The long list offered skeletons in great variety, and Ye Chong brightened up at that. He was relieved to find that it was possible to find skeletons after all. For a skeleton carver, nothing would be more scary than not having any skeleton materials! Besides, the skeletons for sale were abundant in numbers and types, and that was a surprise to Ye Chong!

"Why are these skeletons in the pharmaceutical section?" Ye Chong could not understand. He could see no relation between skeletons and pharmacy.

"There is a branch in pharmacy that uses flora, fauna and mineral ores as ingredients to produce medicine or for treatment. Animal skeletons are a very important part of it. From the trade volume, this branch must be quite popular here! Of course, I will have to investigate further to understand the details, what I have just said was only a probable deduction!" Mu replied.

"There's a branch like this?" Ye Chong was surprised.

"Yes. It's inherited from the past, and grew systematic over time. However, it's still not a very well known branch, since these treatments are usually effective against strange conditions. My database has little information on this!" Mu said.

Most of the skeletons were from mutant life forms. They came in all shapes and colors, but the points for each of them was very different from Ye Chong's expectations. For some skeletons that looked average for Ye Chong, were priced ridiculously high. Some skeletons with good properties were, however, priced very low, and even as Ye Chong read on he regretted not having a single point to spend on them!

He realized then that this was the pharmaceutical section, and he should be about the only skeleton carver in the whole of Nine

Gates. His valuation of the skeletons must be different from theirs. That was alright, since it could be advantageous for him. He could use fewer points to buy some excellent skeletons, thus reducing the cost.

With some understanding of the market, Ye Chong began to consider the ways he could earn enough points to buy skeletons.

How could he earn his first pot of gold? Ye Chong frowned in contemplation.

"My database has many special formulae for alloys, you can exchange them for Nine Gates points!" Mu suggested.

"No!" This suggestion was immediately rejected by Ye Chong! Ye Chong understood that these formulae were far more valuable than a full skeleton mech, and could potentially make the Sanctuary even stronger! Based on the current situation, the Sanctuary was now his enemy, and improving the strength of his enemy using his information for short term benefits was something Ye Chong would never allow.

Even if he wanted to exchange them for points, Ye Chong would rather get them from the detainees, and not the Sanctuary.

Ye Chong walked into Blue Sandstone for the second time. The middle aged man saw Ye Chong and was surprised, but quickly greeted him, "Young man, why are you not preparing for your trials? Still wandering around?" He was still mocking Ye Chong on the inside for being a candidate at such a young age.

"Yes, the trial's changed!" Ye Chong looked straight towards the Eden-IV model, and spoke without turning, "That Eden has a problem!"

"Problem?" Ye Chong's off tangent remark caught the middle aged storekeeper off guard, and found himself moving towards the Eden as he said, "What problem?" His expression was one of disbelief. While he was not entirely satisfied with that Eden, he

was still skeptical of how this boy could point out a problem.

"Eden-IV's special feature is its stability, while its weakness is its lack of speed. You want to improve its automotive capabilities, so you added the horizontal stabilizer while also simplifying its main body. But that greatly reduces the stability of this mech! Besides, most importantly is, the mech's defenses will be sharply reduced!" Ye Chong spoke without expression.

"Eh!" Ye Chong spoke the truth, and the middle aged storekeeper was a little startled. "You make sense, I guess! But I can't do much about it, Eden can't use any other engine model, so I could only do what I did!"

That was true. Eden's engine was incompatible with other models. This also resulted in Eden being mostly abandoned by mech modification enthusiasts, and rarely would anyone choose the mech for modifications. That was why Ye Chong first noticed the Eden model displayed here.

"There is a solution, but it's quite complicated!" Ye Chong said. He had studied this problem before at Aurora, and even asked for advice from the elders there, and finally came up with a solution. Ye Chong was quite intelligent in this aspect.

"Haha, young man, don't go around boasting, it's not a good habit!" The middle aged storekeeper was unfazed. He did not imagine the serious looking young man before him to be careless with words, and this lowered his opinion of the young man. The middle aged storekeeper may only be the owner of a small store, but he was a candidate who passed a Level Three Trial. Once, he was famous throughout the Five Galaxies, and his cautious attitude was already deeply ingrained in him. That was why he disliked the young man's boasting.

"Oh, if you want to know, I'll sell it to you for 10 points!" Ye Chong finally revealed his true intention. In reality, Ye Chong believed that selling his solution for 10 points was an undersell. If

he was not urgently in need for points, he would never have sold the solution. It was not that the solution was actually worth more, but anyone would appreciate more of the solution that they worked hard to come up with themselves, and Ye Chong was no exception.

The middle aged storekeeper frowned and said, "If you have an improved solution, I'll give you more than 10 points, I'll offer you 20! Young man, you're still a boy, don't learn to exaggerate!"

Ye Chong knew that his age was always keeping him from gaining another person's confidence. Ye Chong was already used to it, and knew just how to change their attitudes.

"If you add a wedge shaped box inside the mech, use Farmier's dual return circuitry for the photon circuit, reduce the thickness of the mech's inner frame by half ..." Ye Chong began talking.

As Ye Chong's clear voice continued on, the middle aged storekeeper's expression transformed from outright dismissal to one of focus. His eyes shone brighter and brighter, reflecting rays of fervor!

When Ye Chong walked out of Blue Sandstone, the wristband already registered 20 points in his account. The middle aged storekeeper had even send him off respectfully to the door.

Ye Chong chose to sell this solution after much consideration. Eden series mechs may be advanced level mechs in the Five Galaxies, but it was just an average mech in the Orbits, and not comparable at all to the Sanctuary's various mechs. Even the market in the Orbits offered mechs more advanced than Eden. While his solution was elegant, it was only suited for a small range of problems. It was only applicable for Eden series mechs, and did not involve anything foundational. This was why Ye Chong chose to trade it for points.

Back in his room, all the mineral ores that Ye Chong bought earlier were sent to his room. Each item was sealed in metal boxes

of different sizes. It was impossible to know what was inside each of them. There was a number on each of the boxes, used to verify the items.

He opened all the metallic boxes and took out the mineral ores. Everything was there, looking exactly as they were displayed as holographic images on the item trade list. Of course, these treasures were passed to Mu for processing, for Ye Chong had his own job to do.

After a long time, Ye Chong finally chose a Leave Muncher's shin bone and a Red Toad's exo-shell, all adding to just two points.

Of course, besides the skeletons, Ye Chong still needed to buy materials for the strengthening chemicals. They were unexpectedly more expensive than the skeletons, and Ye Chong used seven points on them.

Soon, all the skeletons and strengthening chemical ingredients that Ye Chong bought were delivered to his room.

Since Ye Chong did not have any processing machinery, he had to work manually. Fortunately, his foundation was solid, and the two parts that he was planning to make were quite simple.

When he was done making the two parts, it was already the second day! One was a round mech padding in murky green, while another was a mech's inner ring in white, overlaid with a vivid red natural pattern of lines, a beautiful thing. These two parts were simple to make, with a short processing time and a wide range of applications. Almost any mech could make use of them.

Ye Chong looked at his products, satisfied, and added them to the item trade list!

When Ye Chong opened up the item list in the mech parts section, the long list of items surprised Ye Chong greatly. The list was too long!

Mech modification technicians and mech assemblers were always

popular occupations, and many in the Five Galaxies worked in these two fields. Whether it was mech modification or assembling, they had to deal with mech parts. Besides, there was the routine mech maintenance and reparation. These were the reasons for the large demand in mech parts in Nine Gates and high trading activity in mech parts.

Ye Chong grew doubtful. Could his two products manage a small ripple in this vast ocean of mech parts?

Chapter 157: Blast

The quality of the parts in the mechs is mainly determined by the material as well as the craftsmanship. And as these aspects of parts-production come into light, the metallic materials holds an absolute advantage compared to other materials existed, which hence, the majority of the mech parts being made out of metals today.

However, a subject had arisen among those maniacs over mech parts in the Nine Gates city recently...

"Skeleton? You mean those parts were made out of skeletons? How was their performance? Have you seen the actual product?"

"Tsk, as if I have the chance to witness with my own eyes. Dociley, you know, the parts always managed to vanish upon rolling out of the production before we even get there. People go crazy over them. I had also heard of how there were quite a number of people camping at the trading market as they eyed the registered list of selling items available, awaiting for their precious to appear like a daily miracle. Hehe, though I have yet to see it by my own eyes, I do have a pal of mine who was able to seize one of them at great fortune. And... he said, he took the trouble to test it out, you know what he got?"

"What?"

"Heh! Dociley, those parts... compared to the same parts by Master Wei... the overall pointer, 9%. They were 9% higher!"

"For real? Much higher than Master Wei's pieces? I'm not buying this. You do know what kind of an elite Master Wei is. His workmanship has to be the best!"

"Not buying this? Well, save your beliefs then, zip your purse along with your mouth. Hmph, when did I, Xu your Bro ever lied to his loyal allies?"

"Yikes. True, true, true! Calm down, my bro... but I must say this is really shocking to me! There was actually someone with a better workmanship than Master Wei. I mean, being skeptical and shocked at the same time is sort of expected, don't you think?"

"Mhm, you have a point. You are shocked, you don't say. I was also shocked the moment I heard my friend mentioning it. It was like the first time I heard of people complimenting the mech parts produced by someone other than Master Wei himself, considering how he had been conquering the market for years..."

"Right! Yikes, a man who could produce such part... he has to be a potent one. Amazing!"

"Mhm, I wonder who that potent one is, for he actually was able to pull off such a great innovation, making parts with bones... I'm not sure if I would not bow before him upon seeing him, as these parts were pure handcrafts too. Look at the level of expertise."

"Pure... handcrafts?! No way! There are still men who strived for purely handcrafted productions?"

"Yeah... I nearly fell from my chair hearing about it. There are still craftsmen willing to make a part of mech from scratch with only their hands. Sigh, see... we are making mech parts, he is making mech parts too, but this is the difference striking the ground! Rumor said that Master Wei was utterly silenced the moment the skeleton parts came to his site."

"Sigh... when would we even be close to that? Behind an expert crafter there are always the other better crafters as well... I can't deny that. And now the market is chaotic, as if a fire was set upon the world, especially when those pilots were crowding the trading market like bees in the honeycombs, all mesmerized and squeezing to see if their precious popped up on the interface."

"Precious they are. The figure does matter, even by a difference of 1% in quality could have been the saving grace of your life in the nick of time, let alone that mouth-watering 9% stat. Those pilots

who have always been playing with fire would need the better gambling rate than anybody else. The parts were not costly either. The price of his usual parts was around 50 points, when Master Wei's parts were easily beyond 100 points. But I had heard about something unusual being crafted yesterday."

"Something unusual? The heck?"

"I'm not too sure but I heard it goes a horrific amount of 500 points. Heh, and it disappeared from the selling list the moment it was registered. People were unable to identify what the item was through the crowd, the figure of the price was very clear though. Tsk, tsk, tsk, 500 filthy points! And the person just buys it like buying a cog from the flea market. The buyer has to be some level of maniac."

"500 points? What are 500 points when you are at the edge of life? He bought a safety charm for himself. In no time the 500 points would come back to him as long as he still has the life to earn them. Everyone must be turning green-eyed over his successful purchase, I guess. An actual safety charm in the shop, I think people would buy it even if it goes by 1000 points without hesitation. So I heard of how the kiddos from the Sanctuary were starting to notice the existence of the parts too."

"Oh? They started noticing it already? But that is expected. Hehehe, the Sanctuary might be a great institute, but an elite of the elites like this should be a rare kind among them. I seriously wanted to know who the greater master this is. He had been staying low, that it annoys me."

"Could he be from the latest batch this year? I had never seen such piece before, until recently."

"Probably! But there is yet any information about this master craftsman. Those old folks at the Sanctuary should know something, only they could have known him so far. You see, those fellas crowding the auction there, aren't they too bewildered of the

man's identity?"

"Mhm, such craftsmanship, it shouldn't be an issue for him to pass the Level 5 Trial I guess?"

"Haleyson knows! Hmph, whatever Level 5 Trial it is, how could we not know the fact that those newcomers from the outside do not recognize what a Level-5 was?"

"Sigh... true..."

...

Ye Chong relaxed before the processor in the room, his eyes fixed upon the hologram of items registered in the trading market. Ye Chong clicked a thumbnail on the side and the hologram of the item selected popped up along with descriptions on the interface.

The fact that the parts were selling hot cakes was totally unexpected for Ye Chong. Parts of such unique and high performance were highly sought by the pilots in the mech market. Not only the standard 50-point parts were gone within twinkling of eyes, the first-class parts which Ye Chong put on the list at a daylight robbery price of 500 points also were sold in one second after he submitted the trading barcodes to the server.

Getting points were no longer an issue to our hero since then, as he already had more than 3000 points in his hands, which was way beyond the 1400-point requirement to pass the trial. So, our hero began spending his remaining time on window-shopping in leisure.

Unfortunately, his luck seemed to have ended days back after the insane sales. He found nothing interesting at the ores section, neither did the skeletons at the bones section appealed him at the slightest. Instead, he laid his hands upon a number of mechs, like this really strange-looking mech for example, which its appearance literally shouted a mutated insect at Ye Chong. It had a brown segmented body, so swift movements were possible. There was a

miniature engine at each segment and 4 passive artificial tentacles were added as extensions.

He had experimented its performance before and this mech was astounding when it traveled through the burrows or the gaps. It was so rapid, yet so peculiarly agile.

Other than this odd mech, Ye Chong had also purchased an engineering mech. Well these mechs were not occupying any of his space. As long as they would be an aid to any form of emergencies, it would be not a problem.

Nine Gates City generally sold the items through two channels - first being the trading virtual networking system Ye Chong spent his days and nights surfing, which happened to be the most convenient and completed way to do shopping; second being the stores by the street like the Blue Sandstone store for instance, where most of their stocks were also available in the networking system, their main income was from walk-in purchases however. They could be not as completed as the networking system, but they were certainly outstanding in a way. They were distinctive and there were a lot of things which would be considered inappropriate to appear online, an information of some top-notch mechs for example.

Since Ye Chong had long fulfilled the point requirement, fairly quickly after he was informed by the Sanctuary, that he had passed Level 3! What he had to do next was simply to wait, to anticipate the Level 4 Trial coming after 2 months or so. He was not aware of the fact that how amazing it was for a mere boy like him to pass the first 3 levels effortlessly, judging by how he did not notice the horrified eyes of Wei Xi, as if she was looking at a monster.

Ye Chong with ample time currently wanted to carry on his training courses, be it the chemist courses left by Lunatic Guan, the fitness training he had been doing the whole time or the meditation training. Speaking of meditation, he realized the fact that it was exclusive to the insiders of the Sanctuary, consequently

he stopped his meditation entirely as he did not want to alert, alarm or annoy anyone beyond his proximity. Meditation was quite tricky and the elderlies at the Sanctuary were terrifyingly resourceful at this. Who knows what could happen to his head if he were to begin meditating somewhere.

The bright side was, it had been quite some time since the last wave of his syndrome attack and Ye Chong was relieved.

After he had received the notification of his success in Level 3, somehow he had been getting some eyes from the people around wherever he went. They seemed to be peeking whenever he was there, or was he overthinking?

Ye Chong's action grew more cautious.

On the other hand, Maltese was in such terrible luck lately, as he literally missed two lovely and godly ores right before his eyes, in one day! The agony was enough to make him cut his own throat a few times! Everything had gone wrong at Maltese ever since. Whatever he did ought to go wrong somehow. It felt like he could choke himself even when he was drinking.

"Maltese!" Two young men in their battle suits came to him.

Maltese lifted his head and replied spiritlessly, "Mhm."

The unusual behavior of Maltese soon caught their attention, "What's wrong? Maltese, you look bad..." One of the young men with a long hair spoke, "I thought you had just received commendation from the Sanctuary? Are you having a headache over the possible ways to spend that amount of points you had gotten? Keke, we could give fine advices on that you know?"

"Maltese, please, don't be so down." The other young man added, "If that old fiend saw this, you are so going to get slaughtered." Old Fiend was a nickname for a teacher among them. The teacher was stern and went rigid as a ruler. His eyes were on everything, including the dress code among his trainees.

"Sigh! I'm just a person with bad luck!" Maltese's tone was spiteful.

"Oh? But we didn't hear any misfortune from you these days, did we?" the long haired young man smiled.

"O-Oh!" Maltese who realized how the words almost slipped through his lips quickly changed the topic, "Well, don't worry about me, no big deal, I can settle it as fast as I knock things out. My problem aside, where are you guys going?" He nearly made a joke of himself. Imagine if these men were informed of his incident during his treasure-hunting online, the number of people in the market would be so going to get quadrupled, quintupled, squared, cubed and soon astronomical. It would be receipt-hunting for him by then. All the receipts of fluttering out from the crowds.

The trainees from the inside of Sanctuary were in a highly competitive environment. It might seemed to be all peaceful and silent on the outside, but in actuality everyday there had to be darkness brewing among the trainees. All of them kept secrets of a kind from each other, be it a certain type of technique or the latest information of something, though the Sanctuary authority was very delighted seeing this since they did prefer seeing their trainees being capable of protecting themselves the better way.

"So we heard that Monkslay managed to grab one skeleton parts from the market and we were going to check it out. Why don't you come along?" invited the long haired young man.

"Skeleton parts?" It was the controversial issue in the market he had been hearing. His face was dumbfounded.

Chapter 158: Shang's Idea Sequel Brain Blast

"Well yeah... Never expected that prick to be this lucky. The lady luck always smiles at dorks I guess." The long haired young man seemed dissatisfied.

"Alright, we shall go and have a look together," replied Maltese with little bit of interest. He had already heard about the skeleton parts from his teacher way back before, but as far as he remembered, the craftsman was known to be an elderly... Did that old man amble his way here? The Nine Gates City? The parts notorious for their limitation in stocks, it was an unaccustomed sight to see them among the insiders of the Sanctuary, where most of them had only heard of the names at most, they had hardly seen the actual object before. And Maltese was one of them.

"Hm?"

Maltese viewed the tainted green plate carefully with growing interests. "That day was a cloudy day, I, Monkslay got my steed to the market and snap! I took this fine plate! And..." Monkslay at the side was proudly presenting his experience throughout the mundane purchase process of this skeleton parts at a beheading price.

Hm, interesting! Maltese with a Metallurgy minor did have some insights regarding the potential of other kinds of materials. This skeleton plate for example, it had a very strange texture and the crafting was well done. Maltese sneaked it over a scanner from his pocket... What... To his horror, the hardness was identified to be much higher than the usual enhanced alloys in the market, while its durability was thrice of titanium.

This is made out of only bones? When did the bodies of these mutated lifeforms become this tough? Maltese's surprise erupted.

As he compared the pros and cons between metallic parts and skeleton parts, he became more intrigued. Fiddling the plates, his

curiosity, his attention had gone over skeleton parts and the elderly who crafted these.

...

Hmph...

Ye Chong noticed that wherever he went, there had to be two or three people tailing him from far away. They were dubious in his eyes but under the aid of Mu's intelligence, the conversation they had as well as their identity had been distinguished. Those were the guardsmen sent by the Sanctuary to protect Ye Chong, but they also shouldered the duty to watch him.

Ye Chong who had nothing better to do decided to start loitering in Nine Gates City, trying to find that very pearl in the sea like the Blue Sandstone. There were strange people from all walks of life, weird things from all categories of mall. Like this reagent which rapidly promoted the melting process of metals, it intrigued Ye Chong greatly along with the other magical things. These things were not "magical" without a price however. They often came with a terrifying price tag. That number of digits on the tag of points required... even for someone who would be considered as half a millionaire like Ye Chong with the points in hand could not keep up with these insane purchases.

So Ye Chong had no other choice than to increase the production of skeleton parts daily to maintain his purchases for the moment. Mu at the same time also seemed to be rather astonished by the number of bizarre-looking people in Nine Gates City.

After the continuous purchases Ye Chong made on these weird items with weird names he could not even mention because they were so weird, he finally stopped. With Mu's assistance he managed to eavesdrop the entire conversation exchanged among the men behind him, it was entertaining he must say. Their conversation not only encompassed the secrets and rumors within the Sanctuary, but also the scorching spite towards Ye Chong's

leisure yet tiresome wandering.

Thanks to the leisure yet tiresome wandering however, Ye Chong was allowed to lay his hands on a variety of peculiar items while learning the city better.

For instance, the source of bones in the market. Yes that would be valuable information to Ye Chong the skeleton artisan.

Apparently the bones in the market were supplied by the pilots in bulks, including those from the Sanctuary and those who got detained. The mutation process among the biological lifeforms had become significantly briefer over the time, as their physique strengthened and their survivability improved, making them harder to capture, harder to kill. The skeletons from these lifeforms were the main source of bones in the market. They were treated as the byproduct of the pilots' hunting however, since the main income of points did not come from selling these skeletons, rather it came from the wages rewarded by the Sanctuary for completing the tasks of hunting the lifeforms.

Unlike the mutated lifeforms, the outlandish primary creatures discovered on some of the primeval planets had been taken to the spotlight, as their bones were the latest darling to the chemists. Since these bones alone had already defined a new possible combination of chemical formulation. Skeletons of such kind were extremely costly in the market and similar to the skeleton parts. They often disappeared the moment they were registered online. These primeval planets were uncultivated and obviously dangerous as well. It was as if venturing into the abyssal unknown to the pilots who headed there cautiously for their missions. Still, if the pilots made it back home, pouches of sparkling points would be awaiting them. High amount of points would be credited to the account, which was something for people to envy along with the valuable loots from the run. Thus, in spite of the hassle and the risk, the participation was active as ever. The Sanctuary also was greatly motivated, considering how the expedition program could

bring them potentials of discovering new species, new resources... or the best, new type of ores.

"Ye." Mu had something in mind, a way that allowed Ye Chong to obtain more bones of premium quality, though the idea was from Shang apparently. It was just that Mu acted as the channel to reiterate his plan word by word, "We shall minimize the cost to achieve maximum profit!" And that was when Ye Chong remembered the fact that Shang was also a true lunatic over economy...

Despite that, Shang's idea piqued his interests.

Days lapsed and right when everyone started getting used to camping before the trading market to hurriedly throw their points over the newly-from-the-oven skeleton parts by the mysterious crafter, a request popped up. And no doubt skeleton parts became the center of attention once again.

The crafter stated, "I would no longer offer my works for sales, instead, if any pilot could provide me bones that are hardly seen in the market, the pilot could get a skeleton part from me for free."

Concisely the message was written yet impulsive the message was to people in Nine Gates City. It had transformed into the hottest topic the moment it was submitted to the announcements.

All the pilots who had obtained the parts from official purchases before were glad in dark, as handling points was much easier than digging out a piece of skeleton that would be considered "rare" to a master craftsman; while those pilots who had yet acquired the parts were in anguish figuring out a way to get some juicy bones to trade.

On the first day after the message was announced, Ye Chong had only received 3 pieces of bones, even though one of them happened to be at the very high-end on both appearance and quality wise. Soon after, Ye Chong sent a set of skeleton parts to the person via the trading system without hesitation.

The effect of this demonstration was unexpectedly impactful to the public. Almost in less than an hour, the happening of this lucky man was already made known to everyone else in Nine Gates City. The fact that he was able to trade a piece of bone for a set of skeleton parts was driving everyone crazy.

Yawn...

The second morning, Ye Chong scratched his back as he entered the collection room. "Let's see what chicken bone I'll have to bear wi... today..." Ye Chong stumbled upon the metal cases piling a hill before him. He was literally dumbfounded, his mouth was half open, his eyes zoned out instantly. The expression froze for the next 10 seconds!

Gosh! Are these people mad? These are just parts, skeleton parts, do you need to be this desperate?

It took the whole day for Ye Chong to pick the few best bones from the piles. That was not the problem... "This is the problem." Ye Chong was wailing as he counted the number of top-end bones he selected... there were literally 30 few of them, which meant he had to create the same number of sets of skeleton parts in return...

I'm killing myself, I'm so killing myself? Ye Chong was having headache as he had only created about 60 few sets ever since he got there. And in one day half of them would be gone. What about the following days? Helplessly he succumbed to overclock himself, striving to produce more parts to fulfill the demands.

On the third night, Ye Chong rubbed his swollen eyes as he hurried his way to the collection room. Out from his workshop, through the corridor, he reminisced the endless night he spent rushing the production of the parts. Those moments he missed closing his eyes while maximizing his efforts, even though he only managed to produce only about 30 pieces of common skeleton parts in the end. And these parts were unfinished... since the production was quite time-consuming by nature.

Okay, now I will head to the collection room and see...

Where did my room go?

Ye Chong was astounded...

Where did the corridor go?

The collection room, the outside of collection room, the following corridor of the collection room were flooded by metal cases containing bones. And judging by the rumbling coming from the room inside, the delivery seemed to have yet ended... The automatic delivery machine was still weaving in and out of the room after laying down one metal cases after another. There were also a huge case flying to his way, which Ye Chong wondered if the corridor could even fit half of it.

This much of metal cases! This much of bones! How many pieces are there? No... How many parts do I have to make? Why do I feel like I'm the slave to the deal instead of the buyers... Ye Chong had dried his tears and seriously hoped that Mu would give him the signature fainting treatment right away. "Dammit Shang! You and your genius idea!"

The first thing to do of the topmost priority was to stop that cursing request announcement straightaway! The people at the market was wondering what could have happened to the mysterious crafter upon seeing the disappearance of the notice which lasted only for 3 days. Speculations brewed among them.

Nevertheless, Ye Chong did not have time for those speculations. "I have works to do!" He could imagine his to-do list bombarded by the number of skeleton parts he had to produce. Simply put, most probably he would have to spend the rest of his vacation before the Level 4 Trial on the production itself!

The development was absolutely uncalled for. On the first day, the first batch of bones arrived generally because of curiosity by the people. They wanted to test the validity of the message, since it

was the first time such an unfair trade request was made in the market. Most of the pilots kept a reserved attitude towards it.

Till that moment when one man declared his success of obtaining the lovely parts, everyone seemed to have been stimulated as they began snapping up every remaining rare pieces of bones in the market, which caused the price to skyrocket over the night!

That happened on the second day, while on the third day, the Sanctuary kicked in. Of course, the flood was caused by them. No doubt, the Sanctuary was the biggest player in Nine Gates City. They held the most resources and also they had the highest demand of quality parts like the skeleton parts for their pilots. So they would hold onto every single opportunity in sight. Old Ge, the master to Ye Chong's skeleton artistry had always been depicting indifference towards the Sanctuary's request, thus the scarce amount in the group. It just felt like a piece of steak being fed to a group of sharks.

The Sanctuary spent the past two days collecting rare bone pieces and had lobbed everything they got on the third day, since these bones would do them no good other than wasting the slots in their inventories after each run, "Might as well we get them traded for some useful parts!" The pilots were motivated especially when they were very much exposed to the use of skeleton parts in their machinates and they were highly aware of the excellent performance of the pieces. The Sanctuary even evacuated the entire floor where Ye Chong stayed just to fit the pieces. They also forbade every other personnel than Ye Chong himself from entering the floor. You could say they lost their heads over it.

Well, nonetheless, one could imagine the burden Ye Chong had to shoulder.

Maltese also sent a set of skeleton to Ye Chong's place, which was a result of his blood and sweat, trying his very best to get from his instructor. He might be addressed as a pilot like the others, he was still a non-combat trainee in actuality, so he could never get loots

like rare bones to exchange for these bewitching parts. But he was smart, he knew his instructor had skeleton of a very peculiar creature, so... "Please sir! Please. This is my biggest plight! Please!" He got to the instructor place and attempted every technique of negotiation, "How about this! If you give me this skeleton, I promise I'll be the best pilot ever!" Begging, promising, offering for trades... "Where are you going sir! Please! Listen... Come on stay for a second!" Stalking, chasing, pouncing... the instructor almost got driven up the wall. He put up his white flag to him when he handed him the set of skeleton with both hands.

...

"C...C..." In the room which was dimly lit by the flickering lamp, the pair of bloodshot eyes trembled as it blinked, Ye Chong was draining every ounce of his vitality to finish the orders he got enslaved to... "Curse you... Shang...", he mumbled countless times, expressing his overwhelming spite towards Shang. He could feel his brain blasting at any second...

"Curse you!"

Chapter 159: Passerby

"Mu, my hands! Look at my hands! You could see it swelling!" whined Ye Chong. His tone sounded like he was going to cry. Ye Chong worked for the next 35 days nonstop, just to cope with the engulfing amount of skeleton parts in demand. Since he did not have the appropriate apparatus to produce the parts, he was forced to craft them the most primitive way - by hands, which directly caused him to overwork his hands. Certainly this did not mean his hard work had gone to waste, after working days and nights continuously for 35 days, his skills had greatly improved. And right before his drowsy eyes, a vast number of high quality bones piled, it was like the discovery of treasure island, a never-before-felt satisfaction. Ye Chong even made a few pieces of skeleton parts himself for replacement, which Mu brought back to the alternate dimension along with the other funny stuffs he bought. This service was only possible with Mu Shang. If they were not there, it would not be possible to zip everything into alternate dimension. Only a high-end photon stimulated intelligence like Mu Shang could execute such task effortlessly in the alternate dimension. The iron lizard scales were also kept safely by Shang the whole time too.

"Yes, your hands are more likely to attract attention, appearance-wise," commented Mu seriously.

"All thanks to that damn Shang. Hmph, just wait for it! Shang, one day you are going to come out and then..." Ye Chong clenched his teeth while he worded his threatening remarks.

"Ye, I am sorry but I have to inform you that you are currently lacking an effective methodology to produce the desired outcome." Mu sounded as if it was for Ye Chong's own good.

And Ye Chong shut it.

...

In Nine Gates City, when the mysterious crafter ceased his request after three days, people started receiving sets of skeleton parts one by one. Those were the one who sent the bones in the first place. So the hottest topic had shifted from why the mysterious crafter stopped the request altogether to what Santa Craft had given one of the well-behaved pilots today.

Maltese's negotiation was not a wild goose chase after all, as he had also received one part too. It was a shoulder pad made out of bones of Crimsonpede. It was more exciting than ever to him. He loved it so much that he immediately switched to skeleton parts research to test it out.

It was a happy ending. Ye Chong managed to finish all parts 3 days prior the Level 4 Trial. What a relief.

Soon, people realized that no one else had received more skeleton parts since then. So they assumed the delivery process to everyone entitled for the parts had ended. Right on the second day after people acknowledged the end of bountiful festival, the price of the skeleton parts had its figure increased by a few digits behind. Nonetheless, no one was shaken by the tempting price enough to sell the parts in hand.

Technically in this event, both Ye Chong and the Sanctuary gained the most benefits.

Ye Chong had acquired a massive amount of rare bones, which consisted of species he had never seen before. The issue of insufficient material had been perfectly resolved. Undeniably, most of the bones were contributed by the Sanctuary.

As mentioned before, the Sanctuary also gained great benefits from the event. About 80% of the parts were in their hands while they had just contributed a mere portion of bones in their storage.

But who cares? This had nothing to do with Ye Chong. His major concern at the moment was the upcoming Level 4 Trial in 3 days. After all the remaining works had been completed, the next thing

on the list for Ye Chong was to take a good rest for he had been barely getting one since the past few days to deliver these parts. He was utterly drained and urgently pleading for a break.

Two days later, Ye Chong had regained his vitality and returned to his active self once more.

And that was when Level 4 Trial was right after.

The guide was still Wei Xi, who expressed hint of respects towards Ye Chong upon seeing him. Being the guide, she was well-aware of the identity of the culprit to this fiasco of skeleton parts in the market. Her respect was not out of courtesy, rather it was out of recognition, likewise to every place else in the galaxy, the one who wielded most strength always got the respect from people, especially in Nine Gates City where people convinced others with fists mostly.

Ye Chong followed Wei Xi and passed the lobby.

A masked lady in purple walked towards them. And Wei Xi held her steps and bowed to the lady promptly. The masked lady nodded at her slightly in return, "Oh?" She stopped, upon coming across Ye Chong, "Who is this man, may I ask?" Her voice was sweet and somehow seductive.

"This is Mr. Ye who will be attending the Level 4 Trial currently," Wei Xi hastened her introduction.

"Oh? How lovely. I never expected a young man like Mr. Ye to be able to pass the first three levels so flawlessly. You are a genius indeed!" The masked lady seemed astounded as her eyes went wide.

"It's just normal," expressionlessly Ye Chong replied in his usual indifference.

"Right? Mr. Ye is so great! He was actually the first candidate who passed all 3 levels in a row!" added Wei Xi.

"Wow, such an ambitious man, yet so capable! Uh huh. Very well,

I guess I should leave now, I wouldn't want to take up too much of the man's time. Good luck, all the best! I have something else to do, if you would excuse me..." The masked lady motioned Wei Xi and walked away, "Good bye."

"We are pleased to see you again, Ma'am," said Wei Xi.

The masked lady had her doubt intensified as she walked... something was tickling her mind for some reason... she could not help but to turn back and have a careful look at that Mr. Ye's back, she wondered... Who is this? Why does his back remind me of someone? I seemed to have seen this silhouette before somewhere... But I can't remember who it was. That face of his was ordinary I must say... I'm sure I had never ever seen this man before.

Hmm... Oh wait! I remember! I have something more important to do! I don't have time for these!

Realizing she was running out of time while being engaged in a mission, "Hah!" She baffled as she reminded herself the time should go to something else more constructive than this, "What's wrong with me?" and she discarded her confusing thoughts.

Ye Chong however was not at ease as the masked lady. His heart nearly ceased functioning the very moment his eyes crossed her.

That... Feng Su, yes, that is Feng Su! It has to be her!

"Ye, caution ahead, it's Feng Su!" Almost simultaneously Mu's warning rang in his head, "And Shang had once performed a thorough scan over her curves." Added Mu, "So we knew."

Ye Chong whose heartbeat was reverberating inside tried to calm his muscles and to act naturally. He would be skewed if Feng Su actually recognized him!

Feng Su's outfit was too outstanding, it was like her signature costume. She was in her purple garb and put her mask on forever. That outfit and that distinct voice of hers had left deep impression

in Ye Chong back then. He had fought her before at the woods near Mr. Yin's residence so he was already informed of her strength despite her deceitfully feeble physique. The wounds she caused lingered as a twitching fright in Ye Chong. Luckily he was in his Black Cove's masks back then, so she did not truly discern every part of his face. "Or else..." shuddered Ye Chong. He refused to imagine what the lobby could have become.

Judging by Wei Xi's reaction towards Feng Su, it was justifiable that she held a high rank in the Sanctuary... Speculated Ye Chong as he reminisced the brief moment they spoke to each other. The lady was somehow attentive over himself... And that sufficed an alarming moment inside Ye Chong.

The footsteps echoing throughout the lobby had vanished, it seemed to be safe for now, "Who is that person just now, Wei Xi? The outfit was quite odd!" Pretended all uninterested, Ye Chong asked Wei Xi.

Wei Xi snickered, "That's our ma'am. Master Feng has always been like this. We are also very intrigued to know her face too! But I had heard that, no man ever knew how she looks other than the elder himself! Master Feng is such a great pilot, she is the ace of the Sanctuary! In spite of her achievement, she was humble and friendly, we adore her a lot!" Wei Xi's eyes lustered with fandom, which was nauseating to Ye Chong.

I see... That explained her power. Well, my defeat back then was justified. I wonder how she would perform when she pilots a mech... Ace pilot huh? Should be really great. What kind of a mech though... that's the question. Ye Chong was running a conference with himself.

Maybe she could be using a skeleton mech. And advanced dark Raven or something, yeah something like that...

And of all possibilities, he had never thought of the likelihood of him witnessing the actual mech himself once before...

"Well!" Wei Xi's eyes blinked expressively, "Master Feng seemed to be really impressed of you!" She stared passionately.

"Oh, really?" Ye Chong threw a random response.

The next moment, Wei Xi carried on guiding Ye Chong to the venue. After a few turns and ups and downs, they had arrived before a room. Wei Xi gestured Ye Chong to place the wristband on his left hand in front of the door to perform the verification. Beep! The door span open.

Ye Chong walked into the room. Wei Xi did not follow however. She waited by the entrance. Her stare was frozen. The door shut itself right after Ye Chong made his entry.

At the end of the room a panel of 7 to 8 elderlies sat. They looked very old and right at their opposite a row of men stood. They seemed nervous at the slightest and like Ye Chong, they should be the candidates sitting the Level 4 Trial too.

Ye Chong's entry caught everyone's attention out of sudden.

"What?" Exclamations bounced back and fro. Even the calmest eyes failed to hide the shock inside. And a look at a participants could explain everything. Ye Chong soon came to his understanding that other than he himself, the rest of the candidates consisted of men in their middle-ages. They had spent their lives striving to be the best to pass the trial and this fella in his twenties popped in the crew. Obviously, Ye Chong would be eye-catching.

Ye Chong's expression was calmer than ever, fearlessly he walked to one end of the queue.

"Ahem! Ahem!" The elderly in the middle could not stand the ridiculous exchange of stares between the candidates over Ye Chong anymore, as he coughed few times to retrieve their attention. Scruff.

And they shifted their attention back to the panel, with their eyes

focused at the elderly in the middle out of the blue. He was in green robe and looked solemn with the few strokes of beard in fair white. His eyes were lustrous.

Green robe?! Ye Chong's heart skipped a beat. He knew that only the mentalists would put on a green robe. This elderly was actually a mentalist?! Ye Chong put up his guard. Even though the mentalists were not as powerful as their pilot counterparts, they still wielded masterly mentality. They were well-trained and well-built in their heads. They possessed countless unpredictable tricks to handle people. They were highly sensible and Ye Chong did practice meditation before. He was worried if he would be caught red-handed by this elderly... if that was the case, it would be bad!

The elderly scanned through the candidates. His eyes shone sharply like a sword, which the candidates shunned as they lowered their heads.

The moment when the elderly's sight hit Ye Chong, he could feel his body being seen in and out. Goosebumps were running over every inch of his skin.

Like what other candidates did, he lowered his head instantaneously. He felt agitated, his stress building up! Mr. Yin's head had such information before, regarding the application of this powerful stare. It required high mentality from the user however. Well, clearly the elderly was the expert among the mentalists. Although he had lowered his head, Ye Chong could still feel the stare lingering around him for a few seconds longer than the others.

"Hmm, very well. Firstly, congratulations on passing Level 3. But I must say, what awaits all of you would be a trial much harsher. Now, let me brief all of you some rules and regulations for Level 4 Trial." The elderly spoke sluggishly. His words felt like an indirect order, which caused everyone lifted their heads immediately.

Chapter 160: Puzzle

"As all of you possess an entirely different title from each other, it would be quite challenging to put you into groups according to a certain category. So we gave in to having masters from various expertise to assist us in the trial this time. The details of assessment would be determined by each master and please hand the list of raw materials needed to complete the assessment to your respective guide. Please be mindful however, that the rarity as well as the grade of the materials you used would also affect your final result. Heh! But you need not worry. You can stay as long as you wish in Nine Gates City even if you fail the trial. I believe everyone here has a great experience in Nine Gates City, different from the chaotic environment back in the Orbits. This is what we call a peaceful and harmonic heaven."

And the corners of Ye Chong's eyes discerned quite a number of people spitting their tongues, expressing faint disdain.

The elderly ignored the disrespectful gesture and continued, "Alright, we would do the grouping next. Go with the master in your field."

The one responsible for Ye Chong's assessment was known as Master Xiao. He had a round face and large pair of ears. The reddish pear-shaped nose was the center of attention. He squinted his eyes often, looked serene and approachable as he smiled.

"Haha." He took a glance over Ye Chong, "So you are that skeleton artisan. Sort of unexpected. Good, very good. Achieving this height at such a young age, your future shall be boundless and bright."

"Thank you," flatly Ye Chong went. There was not the slightest bit of excitement in his expression.

The squinted eyes of Master Xiao had a stream of awe, "And you are also humble and undisturbed, a rare kind too. Very, very, very

good!" Master Xiao could not hold his consecutive "very" to convey his admiration.

"I wonder what would my assessment be?" Ye Chong was unshaken by his words as he asked, the assessment was more of his concern.

"Patience, young man, patience!" Chuckled the master, "It took me quite some time to figure out the issue too. But as I thought over the course, I finally had found a fine problem for you to solve."

"I see," Ye Chong responded briefly while he waited for Master Xiao to declare the puzzle.

"Yes, it is also my first time seeing the skeleton parts in my entire life. I did experiment on your works before, not bad... mhm, truly not bad I must say, the parts were exceptional in all aspects. However, there remained a few shortcomings in the usage of bones by nature, which are also difficult to overcome. They are affected by the temperature for example. Under high temperature, their performance would go down drastically... And so..." the master began his discussion.

Ye Chong nodded a few times in agreement. Master Xiao was right of his words. The bones were naturally incompetent in this aspect comparing to metals.

"Inside a mech, other than the processor, what possesses the second greatest importance would be the engine itself..." Master Xiao spoke on with a smile, "Of course we can't produce a complete skeleton processor, but for an engine, it would be a bit different... There should be some possibilities I believe. But I'm not confident to say whether it would work, that's why you are here. Haha! Don't look at me like that, it's normal for a greenhorn like me to be unsure of something, since I do not know much about bones, unlike you. Mhm, and this would be your assessment - use bones to produce an engine for mech. No limit on the models, as long as it's

an engine, it could blast into space, you are good to go. Well certainly you could involve the use of other materials to form the parts, but you should remember something - the greater proportion the bones occupy in the entire engine system, the greater chance you would pass!"

Ye Chong shuddered. Making an engine with mostly bones? Did I miss something?

"Hah!" Seeing how Ye Chong returned a bewildered look, Master Xiao laughed, "What you just heard was right. I am requesting you to make an engine with bones. Alright, there you go, you got your assessment. You have a duration of 3 months to sort this out and build the engine yourself. As Master Fan had mentioned, if you need any material, you could inform your guide. Mhm and this is my travel code. If you have any questions or you have finished your work, feel free to contact me through this code. Hahahaha! I am looking forward to that boney engine! Young man, may you have a successful trial!"

Ye Chong inserted the code into his travel wristband, "Alright, you are good to go! Hahaha! I got to go too! I have lots of stuffs to do you know!" said Master Xiao.

After bidding farewell to Master Xiao, Ye Chong left the room and on his way out he came across the other candidates, who seemed really troubled. Apparently their assessments were downright challenging too.

Heading back to his room, Ye Chong was figuring of a way to build a functional engine with mainly bones.

Bones are from the skeleton of animals. They are prone to high heat, even for mutated lifeforms which are blessed with strength and toughness. When it comes to heat resistance, especially intense heat resistance, they are no match to metals, which was fundamentally why Ye Chong never thought of including bones in producing an engine. From what he knew, he saw no chance in this

innovation. This is the characteristic of the bones, a limit given by nature. The so-called skeleton engine he had used before was the patched engine of Yu Di, where he tried to piece everything back together with bones after Yu Di was badly damaged. Among all the skeleton parts he had produced so far, the only applicable piece in engine at a better chance was the plate.

But then... now the puzzle had sat before him. And he did not seem to have many options there. There was no time to wonder if the puzzle was solvable from the beginning. Ye Chong should be wondering the hows and not the whys. He should be verifying and not deducing.

"Mu, do you think it's possible?" asked Ye Chong to Mu. It took him quite a while to collect his thoughts, figuring out the possibilities. The outcome was depressing however. Bones are not possible to be included in engines.

"Of course it is!" said Mu and Ye Chong's face brightened. "It's only the matter of the greatness of odds."

Duh!

Ye Chong's hope sank under the sea, "Thank you Captain Obvious."

"At a certain level it is, Ye. But this is the only answer to your inquiry. So, you're welcome! Honesty is the best policy! I should be praised," said Mu righteously.

Ye Chong sweated. Was this Mu? Or was it Shang? Wait it was Mu. Ye Chong somehow could smell a little Shang in the Mu.

Oh well it seemed like it's up to me alone. Ye Chong pondered. Running away from difficulties was not his style. Moreover Master Xiao had said that he was allowed to include other kinds of materials. This should be it, a way to balance things out.

But then, is it really true that it is impossible to build engines with bones?

Ye Chong spent the next few days figuring it out. Once he sat down it would be the whole day. He froze like a sculpture as he pondered.

Day 1...

Day 2...

Day 3...

Day 6...

Day 9...

Ye Chong rubbed his sore thighs, he stood up and stretched his back. It had been the tenth day since the assessment was given and Ye Chong still had not figured out a satisfactory solution of, although he had come up with a few ideas to balance things out, like he might be using a metal core while replacing the parts of the lesser impacts with bones. If there was no better way in the end, this would be it.

Stretched his limbs, he walked to the table and lifted the plastic cup to his lips.

The rippling water reflected the puzzled man knotting his brows in his fatigue.

Water.

...

Suddenly, an inspiration flew over his head like a shooting star in the darkest night. Water, water, water, water... liquid... Ye Chong caught on something... What kind of liquid? Yes! Yes! Reagents!

Yes! I could use reagent to modify the attributes of bones! The strengthening liquid I had used before, didn't it successfully change the entire attribute of the bones? If I could use a kind of reagent that could dramatically enhance the heat resistance of the bones, then that solved it!

Ye Chong was very excited as he gargled the remaining water in

the cup.

A hint appeared after contemplating in misery for the past 10 days, how could Ye Chong not be worked up?

But his excitement extinguished quickly. He thought it through... I might have gotten the concept but to build it would be the toughest part... This was especially true when Ye Chong had nothing else in mind than this concept itself.

He did learn from the best, however he was just an entry student under Lunatic Guan. Those formula of strengthening liquid Lunatic Guan had taught were solely for strength and toughness enhancement. They did not have a positive impact on enhancing heat resistance of the material. For a newbie in alchemy like Ye Chong, it would be a myth for him to create a new kind of formulae that strengthened the heat resistance level of bones.

He recalled the classes he had with Lunatic Guan, the knowledge he had absorbed over the time... yet none of them was applicable.

Feeling powerless, he begged Mu for some inspiration, "Mu, do you have any good ideas?"

"Hmm. Ye, your idea is great. But I must admit that I do not possess much information regarding the alchemy. I have an alternative however."

"What alternative?" Ye Chong was edgy like a man who saw a silver lining in the sky after the darkest night. According to his past experience, most of the alternatives suggested by Mu would turn out to be a working miracle.

"Remember that Guan's automatic analysis mechanism? You could try that!" reminded Mu.

"Oh!" Ye Chong's eyes shone, "How could I forget such a trump card? Hey, Mu didn't you keep that mechanism right into your databank already?"

"Yes, you are correct. It is indeed in my databank. Nevertheless I

have yet managed to discover the core behind the working of this particular mechanism. The core pattern to be precise, since I lacked the information on alchemy in my databank, I could not perform an effective analysis. I could not also produce an accurate judgement on its validity!" explained Mu.

"Wow, the mechanism is that great?" Ye Chong was dumbfounded. A mechanism that even Mu could not pinpoint? That meant Lunatic Guan's exclusive analysis mechanism was of a high level of expertise. Mu had failed to analyse the Guardian this far. Ye Chong did not expect there would be another machine added to the list.

Geez, talking about the number of geniuses in this world. Be it Gu Shaoze or that Lunatic Guan, they were not much older than himself, yet they managed to become the pioneer of their fields respectively, especially when they had built something brilliant and new upon their forebears. Sadly fate was cruel towards them. Gu Shaoze was dead and Lunatic Guan had vanished in search of her sister. Could the god be in envy of their brilliance?

Sometimes I just feel...

As times went, Ye Chong was fully indulged in his thinking.

"Ye!" Noticed how Ye Chong had been building a castle in the air, he screamed.

"Oh! Sorry..." Ye Chong who returned to the reality sneered at his own ignorance. For what was I thinking this much? I'm just a folk of nowhere. It is great enough if I could survive. Currently Ye Chong only wanted to resolve the brewing illness inside him, so he could find a place where no one would recognize him and live a tranquil life! Unfortunately, that goal was a little far-fetched at the moment.

"Want to try?" asked Mu.

Made up his mind, he exhaled in puff, "Alright!"

Chapter 161: List

Skeleton Artisan, a specialized branch of craftsman well known by the people, who uses bones of a variety to build all sorts of parts for mechs.

Yes mech parts... That did not include engine parts!

Building a skeleton engine was never something that came across in Ye Chong mind. This was simply because it required to alter the attributes of bones entirely, which could be said in simpler terms - it had gone beyond the artisan fields. To Ye Chong, a skeleton artisan would be one who maximize the strength of bones alone. And the current solution to his problem was already against his belief since it involved permanently altering the bones' characteristics. They were of two ends of the tangents, not even close in theories. He succumbed to the alteration however since he did not see the flow without modifying the bones.

He ordered a bunch of bones from Wei Xi. He did have his own set of quality bones in possession, like mountains of them, but Ye Chong was not foolish enough to use them over a silly assessment. Those were his blood and sweat! In addition, Ye Chong also specially requested an advanced alchemy analyzing machine from Wei Xi. The machine was much more avant-garde than Lunatic Guan's mechanism and it also had a more intellectualized control.

As there was a variety of bones in the field while also being very different in nature, Ye Chong was forced to test them out one by one.

Ye Chong picked a few bone-types with excellent physical attributes and placed them into the analyzing machine. He would then launch the mechanism through the processor.

The very first step was intensely time-consuming, since there were simply too many types of bones in the field. The number remained vast even after the first round of selection, which caused

Wei Xi's massive delivery to his room. It was fully occupied with bones. There were some rare bones but Ye Chong did not care any longer. Who the heck cares about "using a rarer ingredient would affect your appraisal blah blah blah"? It would already be a miracle if I could build a full skeleton engine!

He finally finished the first stage after spending the whole month. Not only he had acquired the possible formula for all kinds of bones, he also had obtained something else. But he got to admit that the credits went to Shang, who got out of the passive role and was able to speak after zipping his mouth for so long. He suggested Ye Chong to take this chance to collect the data of bones in various aspects. Ye Chong approved the idea... well it made sense. We were going to analyze them anyway, we might as well do a full detailed analysis. These information could come in handy some point in the future. Of course, the information collecting was naturally Shang's duty since the enormous databank of Mu Shang had too many spaces to fill.

Ye Chong could not help but to mutter, this Shang actually could give constructive suggestion sometimes.

Certainly, the mutter was clearly heard by the person mentioned and a barrel of counterarguments and rage were fired.

So, not only Ye Chong got the possible formula for the bones, he also got the full detailed information regarding the bones' attributes from all aspects through the analyzing machine.

The power of Guan's automatic analyzing mechanism was once again demonstrated. Ye Chong had actually obtained about 300 sets of formula. When Shang passed him the list along with the figure he almost fell from his chair!

300 sets? There's more? Th-This is horrifying! Ye Chong only expected pessimistically about 30 sets as the outcome but the machine managed to formulate an digit extra to the the figure. The number was a little scary!

Wei Xi was absolutely troubled at the moment, since she had to invest a portion of time daily to run errands for Ye Chong, while Ye Chong's room had already transformed into some kind of graveyard. Wei Xi might have undergone stern trainings to get her position but standing among skeletons of different shapes and colors was pressuring her. She could not inhibit her fear sometimes. Regrettably due to her duty, she could not leave on her will. By then she only begged the assessment to end quicker and she could return to the Sanctuary, carry on with her studies and be away from these nonsense.

This young Mr. Ye was not an easy master to serve. That list he nonchalantly passed to her before was a nightmare fuel, a fainting spell to her mind. The length of the list almost could knock her out on spot. She ran to the storage and mentioned the bones listed. The storage keeper stated that most of the bones listed were missing in the storage and claimed that the Sanctuary had redirected batches of them on an emergency back then, which caused the list impossible to be fulfilled.

Wei Xi's eyes went wide like saucers. Of course she was well-aware of what the whole emergency redirection was about, "We sent everything to that Mr. Ye to get the parts!" She got to compromise... and she gave in to pleading Master Fan, the host for the Level 4 Trial this time. "Hmm..." Pondered Master Fan. He then performed a direct order to the 7 combat squads to head to the nearest base to transport the missing bones on the list as soon as possible, which gave the second shock to Wei Xi. "Did master just sent 7 combat squads just to transport bones for a mere man?"

This is too much! Wei Xi who witnessed Master Fan giving his orders via the communicator was in her aftershock.

And then Ye Chong asked an analyzer from her. The third shock came like a blow to her head. She was also an alchemist, of course learning the basic theories of reagent production was the bread and butter for her title. Nothing was foreign, except for the fact

that Ye Chong demanded an analyzing machine specialized for alchemist. Was he actually an alchemist too?

Wei Xi was very bewildered. She grew skeptical and spent the remaining time watching Ye Chong. But during the entire month, all Ye Chong did was dumping the bones into the machine to generate data. What in the Nine Gates he's doing? Wei Xi, unaware of Ye Chong's assessment, was very confused by his action. The only thing she could do was to report all these to the elder and the elder ordered her to keep her eyes on him.

Ye Chong and Shang had already noticed the strange behavior by Wei Xi. So the automatic mechanism was used only when Wei Xi was not by his side. The program was also set to be permanently destroyed at anytime. They could not let the Sanctuary have it, if they ever have it, then it would be terrible!

300 sets of formula... with easily more than 10 raw materials and reagents required each... There were some that required more than 100 materials with most of the names being alien to Ye Chong.

And then Shang gave him a new item list, "Ye, this is the compiled list of everything you'll need to produce these formula."

It was a much shorter list compared to the list of bones but it was as dazzling, especially with the additional list of necessary apparatuses and flasks.

"There." Indifferently Ye Chong passed the list to Wei Xi and headed back to work, "Are these..." Wei Xi was petrified by the length the fourth time during her service, it took her half a minute to finish her line in agony, "Are these what you need? Mr. Ye."

Ye Chong gave a few nods. "Poor lassie... Ye, you gave her a heart attack," sympathized Shang in his mind.

Although getting this list done would be the worst task for a guide in the history of humanity, Wei Xi at least could confirm something - this young Mr. Ye was not only a skillful skeleton

artisan, but also an expert in alchemy. She could not tell if Ye Chong's expertise in crafting skeletons being masterly, but regarding alchemy, judging by the list, she was 200% sure that he had to be an excellent alchemist.

Maybe, "excellent" was no longer befitting to his knowledge. The list had exposed too much of him... the number of raw materials for reagents involved was nearly uncountable while some of them being really uncommon in the field. There were also a few apparatuses only handled by the experts.

Wei Xi did not hand the list to Master Fan straight away, instead she passed it to the elder and shared her insights regarding the issue. The face of the elder grew grimmer as he checked the list out while listening to Wei Xi's observation. He turned on the communicator on the table and instructed something softly.

A middle-aged man walked into the room very quickly later. "Mr. Had!" Wei Xi was astonished as she boomed.

This man named Had was Wei Xi's teacher in alchemy. He was handsome and always well mannered. He was the foundation to the fandom of girls going crazed in the Sanctuary.

Heard the shriek, the man turned and smiled at her. He then turned back to the elder and bowed, "Yes, my elder, how may I assist you today?"

"Had, I want you to look at this list." The elder's hoarse voice rang in the room. He tapped the processor on the table afterwards.

Ye Chong's list was projected on the hologram floating before Had.

Had knotted his brows upon seeing the first few apparatuses listed. He seemed intrigued at first, till he saw the following items he lost his interest and in exchange, worries shrouded his expression.

"Did you see something? This is one list of request from a

candidate of the Level 4 Trial this year. And we did not have any information of his background in alchemy. I think you should be able to discern something from the list. Most importantly, are you able to estimate his standards in the field? This is very essential for us. A skeleton artisan who knew alchemy like the back of his hands, how could we let go of a talent like this?" The elder's voice trailed off...

Had pondered for a while and he stated, "Judging by the list alone, the candidate could wield quite a high level of skills in alchemy. For example, there's this Ever-brightening Powder in the list, it is an extremely familiar material that even most of our alchemists in the Sanctuary would be foreign of. Ever-brightening Powder needs to be combined with Falts reagent. That was a hidden law that it would not be surprising for an experienced alchemist to never hear of it. I was also one of them till one day I spotted it on one note by a master alchemist by chance. And the note was right. I discovered Falts reagent very soon after. Other than this, the list also has included a certain number of materials from plants, ores and non-extracting reagents, which was undeniably heading backwards from the current trend in alchemy. Yes, I suspect, he could be a kind of chemist from the ancient faction."

"Oh?" The elder's eyes lustered, intrigued, "Chemist from an ancient faction? Very interesting. Anything unique about them?"

Wei Xi raised her ears, she would not want to miss any parts of this juicy and precious information of ancient lost myths.

Had hesitated for a moment... "Um... the ancient faction held a total different ideology than the modern chemist. They worshipped the nature and they were exceptionally low-profiled. They were in the dark, not known to people. Only an official family member could be the successor of such artistry. Since they had existed beyond the records, the depth of their research in the alchemy was much greater than the current chemists in the field.

They had their own specialization and somehow they have a kind of rapport between the branches. Mhm, I'm sorry I do not know anything else about this faction. I only knew this much after reading between the lines in the master alchemist's note."

"If he is in fact an alchemist from the ancient faction, and we were able to bring him into our Sanctuary, how would you judge his value?" The elder stated briefly.

"Ah!" exclaimed Had. "That would be invaluable! Absolutely invaluable! We knew nothing about the ancient faction techniques! And they possessed a totally different theoretical framework than modern alchemy! They also only passed their expertise to their children. There were too many mysteries in their clan! If we could know all these! I believe the standards of our alchemists in the Sanctuary would be brought into an age of rapid development! And we could easily overtake those Black Covers and MPAs, we could even toss them at far end! This is absolutely, significantly bringing us benefits! My elder, you can't let this man go!" Had's face reddened out of agitation.

Wei Xi was stupefied upon seeing a docile person like Mr. Had was going wild over a mere man.

"Mhm, very well! He actually exposed his identity to us, that he could be an alchemist of the ancient faction! Then we should not have a reason to let him go. Those fools from our Sanctuary could barely make the simplest skeleton parts, even after analyzing the parts. Yes, yes, yes, if we kept him, this could be solved, since you know, skeleton parts are great parts." The aged eyes of the elder were glossing in eagerness.

"Yes, sir," excused Wei Xi herself, back to the outside of the room. She could not stay calm. She never foresaw all these. That young Mr. Ye being so highly regarded by the elder and Mr. Had. Wei Xi's heart ran cold however... upon recalling the fate of this genius in that dark room just now. And obviously he was not the one in command of his own fate.

Sigh, a mere pawn like her could barely do a thing. Plus, the elder made his decision for the Sanctuary's own good. Maybe his stay at the Sanctuary would be far more beneficial to him.

She comforted herself and tried mustering her last few bits of happy-go-lucky nature, even though that hint of grief kept haunting back.

The order she received from the elder was to fully assist Mr. Ye while reporting her observation from time to time.

She went to Master Fan and passed him the list.

The face when Master Fan got the list from Wei Xi was certainly priceless. That popping eyes of his and that never-before-seen epic wriggling of his face was amusing to Wei Xi.

Ye Chong soon received all the listed reagents and apparatuses.

If it was not the supreme advancement of these apparatuses, running through about 300 formula could kill Ye Chong simply at mixing stage alone. In spite of that, mixing all 300 formula still took 3 days. That was not annoying. Wei Xi, was however. Ye Chong was puzzled as Wei Xi no longer spent a portion of her time with him. She literally stayed with him 24/7 ever since.

The only saving grace though, was that Shang no longer expressed his flaring passion of terror towards Wei Xi. So his ears were spared. His inner peace was bestowed.

Wei Xi was watching every move of his and no doubt the cautious chemist had noticed everything. He sneered as he found her action rather ridiculous. Considering the complexity of the formula, even one with amazing memory like Ye Chong could not digest and remember everything at once facing the table minutes to minutes. That aside, he was performing metal transmutation to the bones - a very new concept in the field. There were tons of gimmicks inside the technique, without any proper instruction, people would not have the slightest idea on what he was doing, not even

for one with alchemy background like Wei Xi.

So the possibility of learning by peeking was heading towards zero to infinity.

As he predicted, Wei Xi gave up her meaningless action not too long later, as these formula were utterly god-written. She tried her very best to memorize one simplest formulae once and passed it to Mr. Had, hoping to hear some insights from her favorite teacher. "What is this?" Mr. Had seemed to be at the bewilder camp as well. He did not understand the working on the list.

And there she was impressed again, by the fact that Mr. Ye, one with similar age as hers, was already running through formulation that her teacher did not understand.

Sadly, eventually, such a brilliance, his fate shall...

Chapter 162: Mu Fei

Ye Chong's spacious room was now a glorious sight. It was filled with rows of neatly arranged bottles of chemical reagents in all colors, in which many types of skeletons were immersed in. Under the illumination of the room's lighting, his room looked like a world of crystals.

In the room were also many high precision apparatus used specifically by alchemists. This made Ye Chong's room looked more like a laboratory.

Ye Chong carefully observed the skeletons in the various chemical reagents. Today was the day he would test the skeletons for their properties. As for how many of them could be valuable, Ye Chong had no idea, and could only leave that to fate.

He removed the skeletons from the reagent bottles one by one. Most of the skeletons had already undergone drastic transformations, looking vastly different from when they were first immersed in the chemicals. It must be due to the immersion process.

How many of them were useful? Ye Chong had to experiment on each of them to find out.

Master Fan sat vexedly before his desk. He had just received orders from the Elder to stop the young skeleton carver from passing the Level Five Trial. This has happened every year, and Master Fan was not entirely surprised. There were many ways to stop the young skeleton carver to pass the Level Five Trial, the easiest way being to modify the trial. If the trial was made very difficult, then it would almost impossible for the candidate to pass.

These modifications were among the easiest to make before the Level Five Trial. Since the trials before Level Five were judged by only one Master, he would only need to assign a compliant Master to judge Ye Chong's test to ensure his failure. Level Five Trials

were, however, judged by a panel of seven Masters. With him among them, and another Master under his control, he could only control two of the seven, and thus, would be unable to control the final result.

The Elder's instructions were for Ye Chong to fail his trial after Level Four. This was extremely troublesome for Master Fan. Master Xiao, who was in charge of Ye Chong, had always been at odds with him, and was a man with a temper. Men like him were all their own masters, basically unmoved by other people's opinions. When it came to their profession, they were all serious about it, and would not accept such interference.

Master Fan knew that, if not for the Sanctuary's control over the Level Five Trials, he would not have become a Master. With his true abilities, he was not on par with the standard requirements, and was one of the least capable of all the Masters. This had always put him in a difficult position - the other Masters were often condescending towards him and isolated him.

He did not even have influence over the other Masters. Those who reached this position by their own strength were often dedicated to their jobs, and found these unfair and manipulative methods repulsive. On the contrary, they mixed well among themselves, and Master Fan often felt that he was boycotted by them. Then came a day when he found blackmail material for one of the Masters, and after some persuasion and threatening, he had him under his control. However, the others quickly noticed that something was wrong. Very soon, both he and the other Master were isolated. On the other hand, these Masters were all honored guests of the Sanctuary. Not only could he not display any hostility towards them, he must also protect them against danger. This was a depressing situation for Master Fan.

All of a sudden, he found himself out of ideas, and could only hope that Ye Chong was incapable of passing the final two Trials. If not, his mission this time would only end in failure.

It was for the Heavens to decide!

Up till now, the Sanctuary could not completely control the five Trials. This was one of the reasons the Masters agreed to manage the Trials in the first place. The Sanctuary's Trials were first proposed by a Master who agreed to work for the Sanctuary. This suggestion was later supported by the other Masters, as they believed that the Orbits should offer a way for outsiders to leave this place. On the one hand, the Sanctuary was under pressure from the Masters, and on the other, they believed it was a good way to discover new talent. In the end, the Sanctuary agreed.

The Masters' professional attitude caused the Trials to be as difficult as they were.

"Huu ..." Ye Chong let out a breath in relief. There were three skeletons with satisfying results after immersion. What excited him the most was the skeleton from an animal called Dopodo. The Dopodo's skeleton had the best results among the three immersed skeletons. Besides, Dopodo skeletons were quite common, unlike the other two rare skeletons. This meant that it could have wide applications!

"Shang, have you recorded the results for the Dopodo skeleton?" Ye Chong asked.

"Of course, how can I make those kind of mistakes that only you would?" Shang mocked.

Acknowledging Shang's words, Ye Chong put pressure into his hands and pressed on the Dopodo skeleton. The bones turned to dust in the blink of an eye, and fell to the ground from between Ye Chong's fingers. Ye Chong heard footsteps approaching him. He was very familiar with them by now, since Wei Xi came to visit every day, and Ye Chong could identify them easily by now.

Ye Chong shook his hands a little, and the skeleton dust came off his hands, spreading into the air like a mist. His hands were now clean.

Wei Xi pushed through the door right then. Ye Chong turned back to face her casually, but was startled!

Why was there another person with her?

Ye Chong immediately went into high alert. He had clearly heard only Wei Xi's footsteps earlier, but now there were two people entering his room. The other person's footsteps had obviously escaped him! On the trash planet, Ye Chong had developed good hearing. After some meditation training, he found his hearing improved even further, even though he did not gain anything in terms of mental abilities.

This was the first time he met someone who could approach him so closely without him hearing his footsteps!

Looking at the man with long hair standing beside Wei Xi, Ye Chong looked calm on the surface, but inside his emotions rolled like a tsunami!

What a terrifying man!

The other party's physique was well balanced, without any particularly bulging muscles, but Ye Chong did not underestimate him just because of this. From what he knew, among the mentalists in the Sanctuary, only the unpopular students would have obvious bulging muscles. The stronger one was, the more inconspicuous they seem from the outside. This man's eyes were calm and steady, and Ye Chong was sure that the man before him was already at a very high level in terms of his mental attainments, unlike what he could achieve with some simple meditations. Ye Chong could only just sense his breathing. If not for his eyes looking at the man before him, Ye Chong definitely could not have otherwise sense the man's presence!

Could the Sanctuary produce men of such caliber on a normal basis? The thought was terrifying!

"Ye, be careful, this guy's good!" Shang seemed to noticed as well

that the man was unusual.

Wei Xi smiled to Ye Chong and said, "Mr Ye, how are your experiments going? Do you have anything new? Oh, right, almost forgot to introduce you two!" Wei Xi stuck her tongue out in a cute way, and continued, "This is Sir Mu Fei, he will replace me as your guide. Sigh, I really hoped to learn more from you, but I have other tasks to attend to, so Sir Mu Fei will act as your guide, I hope you and him will get along together!"

Ye Chong started to think. With the man as guide, would that not mean that he would be nearby every day? Sir? It seemed that he had a high status! Ye Chong's expression did not change as he acknowledged, "Okay," and nodded at Mu Fei.

"Glad to be of service. I heard you have quite astonishing achievements in skeletons, please take care of me!" Mu Fei's delicate profile lacked the usual masculine roughness, and he smiled enigmatically as Wei Xi watched from aside, charmed.

"It's nothing." Ye Chong waved in polite dismissal.

Wei Xi noticed the two skeletons in Ye Chong's hands and asked curiously, "Mr Ye, are those skeletons from your successful experiment results?"

"Yes, only two of them barely make the cut!" Ye Chong affected a regretful expression.

Wei Xi quickly consoled him. "It's alright, even so, they are still Mr Ye's astonishing breakthroughs!"

Fei Mu suddenly approached from the side. "These must be the skeletons from the Rohin primate and the Blitzwing!"

Could he also be well versed with skeletons? Ye Chong was again startled, but he managed to take a casual glance at Mu Fei and asked in a calm but slightly surprised voice, "Is Mr Mu also experienced with skeletons?"

Mu Fei smiled modestly and said, "I don't know much about

skeletons, but I've encountered with these two mutants before!"

Ye Chong was surprised once again. He knew these two life forms. The Rohin primate was alright, but the Blitzwing was terribly ferocious and aggressive. They always appeared in pairs, and their claws were sharp, capable of damaging mech armor. They moved agilely and were cunning creatures, difficult opponents to fight against! Mu Fei may have said that he encountered them before, and Ye Chong believed that it must not be some friendly encounter. It seemed that Mu Fei must be very strong!

Why did the Sanctuary assign Mu Fei to him? Ye Chong was perplexed.

However, Ye Chong quickly grew absorbed in his work for the Trial. No matter the circumstances, passing the Trial was still his utmost priority. What made Ye Chong uncomfortable was that Mu Fei never seemed to leave him alone. No matter what he was doing, the man would observe with interest from the side, and that made Ye Chong grew suspicious of him.

Nonetheless, there was not much time left. Ye Chong was too busy to mind having Mu Fei around him. He began to work in earnest towards building a full skeleton mech engine. Ye Chong, careful as he was, had thought it through. Since Master Xiao had said that any engine model would do, Ye Chong chose the simplest mech engine he knew of - the Raven model engine, which was the engine for the eponymous mech that Ye Chong was very familiar with.

Even so, the work took a lot of effort from Ye Chong, since this was his first time building such a thing, and he had no experience to draw from. Fortunately, however, Ye Chong finally completed his work within the designated time frame, building the world's first full skeleton mech engine!

Chapter 163: Encounter I

"It's wonderful! Ye, I didn't think you could really do it, it's really astonishing!" Master Xiao caressed the full-skeleton Raven engine, praising in deep fervor! Beside him were a few other Masters, invited along by Master Xiao! They too had the expression of a child getting his favorite toy, standing around the world's first full-skeleton mech engine, watching in awe.

Mu Fei wore a thin and gentle smile on his face as he watched the elderlies' excitement. He had witnessed the birth of this full-skeleton mech engine first hand, but these Masters' excitement had far exceeded his expectations. "Perhaps I should reconsider the value of this engine," he thought as his eyes brightened momentarily before resuming his usual inconspicuousness.

Of course, Ye Chong passed his Level Four Trial without incident!

Ye Chong was observing Mu Fei discreetly, and Mu Fei's minute change in expression did not escape his eyes. "Hmph, whatever you're playing at, I won't make it easy!" Ye Chong smiled coldly inside.

"Mr Ye, this way please!" Mu Fei stretched his hand out courteously.

Ye Chong drew in a deep breath upon seeing the starship before him. He was finally leaving the Orbits! For a moment, he was overwhelmed with emotions!

Since the Level Four Trial with the full-skeleton engine, Ye Chong already guessed that the Level Five Trial would involve building a full-skeleton mech. Fortunately, he was ready for that. Ye Chong only built a Raven mech, since he did not want to truly benefit the Sanctuary. However, even with just a Raven, a beginner level mech, its performance was still enough to impress all the Masters. Of course, the success was also partly due to his previous work on the full-skeleton Raven engine.

As expected by Ye Chong, once the full-skeleton Raven was built successfully, it was taken in by the Sanctuary.

News of the year's first candidate to pass the Level Five Trial spread like wildfire across the city of Nine Gates! For the detainees in Nine Gates, their strongest wish was to leave the Orbits and return to the Five Galaxies. No one had passed the Level Five Trial in recent years, but there was finally one person who managed to do so. This brought life back to the slowly numbing lives of the detainees in Nine Gates, their grim hearts finally catching a glimpse of hope!

Soon, details of this candidate began to make their way into all corners of the city. He was apparently young but very talented! He was also a mysterious skeleton carver, and those trendy skeleton parts earlier were all his work. Additionally, he was also rumored to be an excellent alchemist.

Heavens, who was this guy? Everyone was amazed!

With his daily vigilance against Mu Fei, Ye Chong did not know that news of him passing the Level Five Trial had already reached the entirety of the Orbits, and that skeleton carving as an occupation was brought to everyone's attention for the first time ever.

Ye Chong was more focused on his current situation. He and Shang agreed that the Sanctuary would not make any move against him here, even if they wanted to stop him from leaving. If they forcefully make him stay, no one might dare to take the Trials again in the future.

As for whatever tricks the Sanctuary intended to pull, they would probably take place during Ye Chong's journey leaving the Orbits. However, hehe ...

Unexpectedly, what Ye Chong found on the starship was the man who was always beside him as his guide, Mu Fei.

"Is your job as a guide not finished yet?" Ye Chong affected an innocent surprise.

"Yes, it's finished!" Mu Fei smiled warmly. "However, the Sanctuary considered my familiarity with your lifestyle, and thought it proper to assign me here to make sure you are well taken care of! Pleased to be of service!"

"I see!" Ye Chong nodded in fake casualness.

The Sanctuary had prepared a grand escort team for him, which consisted of four standard combat squads. Such a strong combat fleet was more than enough to keep him safe. However, it was also enough to keep him under their control. This must be how they saw it!

Ye Chong observed all this in detached coolness.

Mu Fei held a high status apparently, as Ye Chong noticed the mech pilots behaving respectfully towards him. What caught his attention was that their respect toward Mu Fei seemed to be sincere! Ye Chong understood that this kind of respect could only be borne towards a truly capable person! Mu Fei's words held great authority here, and even the starship's captain would take his advice seriously.

It seemed that Mu Fei was no ordinary person!

The ship flew steadily onwards, and Ye Chong would occasionally receive a call from one the Masters asking after him. Whenever this happened, the captain would report the starship's current location to the Masters in detail.

Within the Orbits, the starship did not encounter any security checks, and the journey was surprisingly smooth.

Soon, starship Glinton left the Orbits, its destination being a planet very close to the Orbits, called McCann. According to them, Ye Chong would transit to another long distance interstellar passenger starship to anywhere he pleased.

Once Ye Chong left McCann and reached a place he deemed safe, he would reach out to the Masters via a special communication device they gifted him to confirm his safe exit from the Orbits. It seemed that even the Masters did not trust the Sanctuary.

It was still possible, however, for the Sanctuary to make their move once he ended his communication with the Masters.

McCann was a transfer station, hosting many long distance interstellar passenger starships that would later travel to many different planets. It was also an important entrepot. There were three more days until they reach McCann. Once they left the Orbits, Ye Chong could sense that everyone onboard the Ginton, besides himself, turning more vigilant. It seemed that the Sanctuary did not entirely control this area!

Was it due to the Sanctuary's lack of power? Or were there other reasons? Ye Chong could not help but guess.

Ye Chong passed each day leisurely. Mu Fei no longer stuck around him every day like he did during the Trials, and Ye Chong found time to contemplate on his own problems. Fortunately, there were many problems that required Ye Chong's attention, and no matter which field it was, they would take him considerable time to go through!

In the captain's quarters onboard Ginton, a massive holographic screen in the center was displaying the starry skies outside. Without the atmosphere's interference, the stars sparkled like diamonds embedded on a boundless dark veil. The colorful nebulae were like an aristocrat lady's velvety skin covered with gorgeous satin, obscured but elegant.

Mu Fei was unmoved by the mesmerizing sight before him. He opened his eyes a little and found the target of his surveillance still in a daze, and closed his eyes to resume his meditation.

Suddenly, a panicky voice broke the silence in the captain's quarters!

"Captain! We have a situation!"

In the blink of an eye, everyone in the captain's quarters looked towards the voice. Mu Fei's eyes sprung open, his gleaming pupils surprising Ye Chong, who was keeping a discreet eye on him. However, Mu Fei immediately realized his error and quickly resumed his usual calmness. The transformation was so quick that, if Ye Chong was not so confident with his eyesight, he might have thought he saw wrong.

"Speak!" The captain wore a steady expression, unruffled due to his mental fortitude and rich experience. Ginton's captain always had looked serious, with an expressionless face. He would only ever soften a little when speaking with Mu Fei. His sharp profile was masculine, and his demeanor spoke of vigor and great determination.

Mu Fei's attention was also drawn towards the captain, and did not notice that Ye Chong's mouth had momentarily curved upwards into a cold smile!

"26 degrees from the radius vector, there's an unidentified starship!" The crew member reported without delay in a clear cut manner.

"An unidentified starship?" The captain furrowed his brows slightly.

"Yes, our holographic scanners were ineffective against it!"

A flash of uncertainty swept past the captain's face as he looked towards Mu Fei, and Mu Fei replied with a slight nod. This moment was captured clearly by Ye Chong. Mu Fei was indeed someone important!

The captain immediately activated his communication device and spoke resolutely, "Lower the speed to Mach 4, all combatants prepare for battle! All non-combatants please go to the safety room!"

Shortly after, a sharp alarm began to ring, a shrill that reached a person's terrified heart. Everyone onboard the starship froze for a moment before quickly returning to their stations. The entire crew began to move in a frenzy. Of course, Ye Chong himself did not.

The opponent's starship was obviously slowing down too, but showed no signs of avoiding as it slowly approached the Glinton.

Mu Fei muttered to himself, "Our starship's scanning system is only ineffective against starships from Black Cove and the MPA. Who will it be this time?"

Upon hearing Mu Fei's words, the captain frowned deeper and asked carefully, "Sir, you think ..."

Mu Fei smiled. His usually warm smile was now, however, filled with great confidence, and even Ye Chong felt that his usually soft expression was now filled with determination and strength.

"We move straight ahead!" Mu Fei spoke with unassailable confidence.

The crew inside the captain's quarters grew excited, affected by Mu Fei's charisma. Truly, what was there to fear? Even if the other party was the MPA or Black Cove, what was that to them? Their four standard combat squads would be enough to tear the enemy apart! Apart from that, Sir Mu Fei was with them!

While both parties lowered their flight speed, they still inched closer and closer towards each other.

As the distance between them grew shorter, the holographic scanner turned effective. On the holographic screen, the other party's starship gradually grew larger and clearer.

Everyone stared unblinkingly at the other party's starship on the holographic screen.

The starship was as black as night, with not even a glimpse of metallic luster. It moved silently like a ghost across the dark space of the universe.

Mu Fei kept his eyes on the screen, as a blurry leaf shaped emblem on the other party's starship began to take shape!

Mu Fei was relieved. "It's alright, it's Black Cove!" As he finished, everyone relaxed a little. They feared that it would be the MPA's starship. Since the MPA and the Sanctuary had just met in a conflict, an encounter with the MPA's ship would probably lead to war!

The Sanctuary and Black Cove had always been careful with each other, and were sometimes even on friendly terms.

The long, thin leaf shaped emblem looked like a half lidded eye, staring expressionlessly ahead.

Chapter 164: Encounter II

"Send out the exchange transmission!" The captain sounded more relieved.

Exchange transmissions were signals sent between starships upon encounter to exchange information and as an act of friendliness. Ships would send out information on their identities in plain code. In the vast universe, the probability of encountering another starship was very low, even in densely traveled flight paths. However, when two starships encountered each other, experienced captains would send out an exchange transmission!

After the exchange transmission was sent out, the captain was obviously relieved, apparently believing that nothing could go wrong from now on. He had sent out the exchange transmission to prevent any unwanted conflict with Black Cove, since they had a guest on the ship that absolutely cannot be harmed. The captain recalled the situation clearly when he received his orders from the Elder, who spoke with severity and placed great importance on his current mission. He was surprised, but quickly realized the importance of the guest.

On the other hand, an open war with Black Cove was undesirable in all respects. As for the relationship and situation between the Sanctuary, Black Cove and the MPA, none of the Sanctuary's members were oblivious to them. If he caused an open war between the Sanctuary and Black Cove, the captain could never bear the consequences! Fortunately, there was Sir Mu on the ship, a great relief for the captain!

Mu Fei's expression was less tense now. Usually, both parties would pass by each other with great restraint. However, even if they were to engage in battle, Mu Fei was not worried, since the ship had four standard combat squads onboard, a powerful combat force. Besides, he was there himself. There should be no problems.

Nonetheless, this was not a good time for war. He did not wish for the young talent that the Sanctuary highly desired to be involved in any accident. During his time as his guide, he understood better than anyone the extent of the young man's abilities! Furthermore, the young man must be hiding his true strength! Mu Fei's instinct told him that Ye Chong's full-skeleton Raven was not his best work yet. He fully supported the Sanctuary's decision to keep Ye Chong with them at all costs. To prevent any accidents, Mu Fei had even volunteered for this mission.

Everyone on the ship relaxed. They believed that it was ultimately nothing to worry about, and some even teased the officer who reported the other starship earlier, saying that he was only trying to get on their nerves.

A dark sense of humor seemed to flash past in Ye Chong's half lidded eyes, and his eyes smiled momentarily like the thin leaf emblem on the front of the Black Cove ship.

"Ah!" The officer who reported the starship just now suddenly gasped!

"Hah, Ah Da, are you still trying to scare us?"

"Yeah, Ah Da, you're too bold! Look at my weak heart, it's still thumping non-stop from your trick earlier ..."

The round of laughter drowned away any sound from the office.

Mu Fei closed his eyes, thinking it comedic.

"Look, guys! I'm not lying! Look!" That officer tried hard to explain, his face red. When the crowd recognized the fear in his words, they immediately realized that something was not right. All the officers on the ship had good discipline, and would not joke on such matters.

Mu Fei felt the change, and opened his eyes wide.

Tens of black mechs in standard battle formation were closing in

on them. The captain's expression twisted as the photon processor returned a mech count of 50. They were all Cosmic Flares, Black Cove's war mechs. Mu Fei was very familiar with them. Johansson, who died in Ye Chong's hands, also used a Cosmic Flare.

50 Cosmic Flares! Why would Black Cove send out such a strong force? Mu Fei was baffled.

"We received the other party's reply!" One of the ship officers reported.

"Forward it here!" The captain spoke chillingly. Since the other party had showed hostility, he had no need to hold back. While he was cautious against Black Cove, he was not afraid of them. The other members of the Sanctuary shared the same attitude as their captain!

"We suspect your ship has one of our members, please open your hatch for our inspection!" The words were direct, and typical of Black Cove.

For a moment, with the exception of Ye Chong, everyone in the captain's quarters were enraged! The other party's high and mighty tone was a blow to the pride of the Sanctuary's members! Even the usually calm and collected Mu Fei felt his facial muscles twitch!

What an insult! Since when would the Sanctuary allow such humiliation?

The other party had approached fully armed, and a few laser beams were already shooting their starship. If they do not retaliate soon, the situation would turn dangerous for them!

While they knew that this was the time for retaliation, it was potentially a move that would lead to an open war with Black Cove. This long term consequence was what made the captain hesitate!

"Attack!" Mu Fei shouted. He understood better than the captain that if the enemy kept closing in, they would be severely disadvantaged! While he did now know why the other party would choose such an irrational action, the situation did not allow for further contemplation!

The Sanctuary's honour must not be trampled upon!

Mu Fei's orders had the same effect as the captain's. None of the mech pilots objected to his words, not even hesitating at them! The four standard combat squads moved out swiftly to meet the enemy!

Thus, a full scale battle between the Sanctuary and Black Cove began!

Everyone found their eyes glued to the live feed on the holographic screen, including Ye Chong. Ye Chong had seen the Cosmic Flare, but Johansson had not managed to attack him before dying from his ambush attack. Hence, Ye Chong was very curious about this mech model!

Close range battle with Black Cove mechs was a foolish act! The Sanctuary and the MPA both agreed on this!

Hence, as the Black Cove Cosmic Flares came into range, all the Dawns immediately opened fire!

Numerous laser beams were shot from both sides across the space between them! However, in a long range battle, Black Cove was definitely at a disadvantage!

Unlike the MPA's accurate shooting, the Sanctuary fought with their unique group battle strategy. Usually a few Dawns would focus on attacking the same Cosmic Flare, but the way they weaved around each other and cooperate was an astonishing sight to Ye Chong. The laser beams from the Dawns were directed towards the few potential defensive positions for the other mech!

Ye Chong was equally amazed by Black Cove's evasion skills! Ye

Chong's most familiar Non-orderly Wave Leap was used throughout the battlefield, alongside other stranger, varied and unexpected evasion techniques! Ye Chong watched in suspense, his eyes shining brightly!

At the same time, Shang reported to Ye Chong on important details of the battle!

The Sanctuary's battle strategy had delivered a heavy blow to Black Cove. In the span of less than half a minute, 15 Cosmic Flares were destroyed, the result of the Sanctuary's effective strategy.

However, Mu Fei did not look happy at all, since he knew that the real battle was only just beginning!

Cosmic Flares were small mechs, and this significantly reduced the probability of being hit! While 15 Cosmic Flares were destroyed, the remaining 35 Cosmic Flares had managed to close in on the Dawn mechs!

The Dawns suddenly broke formation, and gathered in groups of three before they charged ahead fearlessly.

Once approached by Black Cove mechs, the nightmare began! This was another fact proven by the Sanctuary!

The Cosmic Flares showed their fangs for the first time before Ye Chong!

Black Cove mech pilots expertly flew, their wild and bloody techniques made Ye Chong realize the true horrifying potential from these Black Cove war mechs!

As three Dawn mechs moved to cover each other, their excellent cooperation and battle skills still failed to prevent themselves from being smashed into pieces by this Black Cove model's brute force impact!

Black Cove battle strategies were chilling to watch! They accelerated to high velocities and ran into the Dawn mechs with all the momentum they gathered, the barbs in their joints enough to

inflict fatal damage to the Dawn mechs, while the curved blade on the outside of the right arm would amputate the Dawn mech into pieces! Blood sprayed out from the pilot inside, the red mist quickly crystallizing, suspended in space, no longer as vivid as before! Their long chains moved in unpredictable ways, strangling and wrapping around the enemy, or even lending momentum from their targets. The weapon was used well, and the chain itself was made with a very strong material!

The Sanctuary's group strategy also caused Black Cove heavy casualties!

The battle between the two sides happened quickly, with no room to breathe! Both sides fought with excellent strategies, and fought cruelly. If one was hit, there was basically no chance for survival! Damaged mechs had no chance of leaving the battlefield, and would run straight into the enemy's mech for a suicide attack!

The battle was fierce and merciless!

In the span of just under 10 minutes, only about 17 to 18 Cosmic Flares were left. The Dawn mechs were even fewer, with only 12 of them left! The situation was not against the Sanctuary, since close range battle was Black Cove's specialty. Additionally, they were outnumbered. As the number of Dawn mechs decreased, the remaining Cosmic Flares survived without any damages.

As the battle reached this stage, with heavy casualties on both sides, none of the mechs backed down. The mech pilots from both sides were equally steadfast in battle!

However, the overall situation was slowly siding with Black Cove, as the remaining Dawn mechs continued to struggle!

Inside the captain's quarters, all the crew members paled in fear. Even the hardened captain wore a terrible expression. This was the first time they had encountered such a terrifying battle!

Mu Fei could stand it any longer. He stood up abruptly and said,

"I'm assisting them!" before turning to exit the captain's quarters!

Upon hearing his words, everyone in there with the exception of Ye Chong felt invigorated. It seemed they were very confident in Mu Fei's abilities!

Mu Fei exited the captain's quarters. Behind him, the cabin door to the captain's quarters automatically slid close, quick as usual.

He could never have imagined what happened next in the captain's quarters!

Chapter 165: Hunter in the Darkness

Just as the cabin door to the captain's quarters closed behind Mu Fei, the room was suddenly plunged into darkness, and astonished cries were heard! However, the cabin door was sound proof. Even with the short distance between them, Mu Fei could not sense anything amiss!

In the sudden darkness, everyone in the captain's quarters were thrown into a state of terror!

Ye Chong quietly deployed Guardian in the darkness. He was now used to Guardian's unique black and white vision, and 3D image sketched out by numerous white lines were familiar to him. Additionally, he already noted down everyone's position in the room. Not to mention, Shang was with him!

Ye Chong moved lightly as a shadow, unnoticed in the darkness.

Ye Chong's unreasonable strength, amplified by Guardian, resulted in terrifying efficiency. This also allowed Ye Chong to move faster. Ye Chong acted more efficiently than he could ever imagine with Guardian's accurate scans!

The gasping voices were almost simultaneously cut off by the clear sound of broken bones!

Ye Chong landed softly before the cabin door. In the brief moment earlier, Ye Chong attacked a total of 16 times without missing even once, crushing their necks. Since Ye Chong moved very quickly, the sound of bones breaking almost all overlapped with each other! Without Guardian's amplification effect, Ye Chong could not have achieved such a difficult feat. However, with Guardian's assistance, Ye Chong easily managed this impossible task!

Just as Ye Chong landed, the cabin door opened without the slightest delay! Mu and Shang were never one for wasting time!

The truth was, just as Ye Chong boarded the starship, Shang had secretly gained control over the entire ship. While the starship was better in terms of armory and automotive power compared to his last experience with Nast, its anti hacking system was far inferior. Shang managed to hack in with his first try, and obtained the highest access rights for Glinton!

From that moment on, Ye Chong waited for the perfect moment, the moment to deliver the fatal blow to his enemy, so that he could escape the Sanctuary's grasp! The one he was most cautious of was Mu Fei. As for the other mech pilots, Ye Chong believed that, given the environment they were in, Guardian was more effective than their mechs. Besides, he had Shang's help!

Black Cove's appearance was a surprise to Ye Chong, but he quickly realized that this was a golden opportunity! However, just as he noticed his improvement in strategizing and adapting, a detailed plan of action was already presented to him. He finally understood one thing - Shang's evil nature made him a better choice than Mu to plan battle strategies!

The plan was comprised mainly of ambushing, faking and similarly cunning moves, almost as if they were made just for Ye Chong, the natural hunter!

The entire plan was truly insidious! Unexpectedly, the captain was unknowingly cooperative. As the exchange transmission was sent, Shang immediately made some appropriate changes to their plan! For Shang, who had the entire Glinton system under control, modifying the exchange transmission was a piece of cake! That was how a patronizing and insulting message was sent out by Shang instead!

The effect was marvelous! Black Cove's commander in chief was obviously infuriated. Of course, it was partly because they were confident of their strength, since they had 50 Cosmic Flares!

They also did not expect the inconspicuous Glinton to harbor

such a powerful combat force, and the result was a terrifying battle! Whether it was Black Cove or the Sanctuary, neither of them was the winner of the battle!

Shang's plan extended even further! He had predicted that Black Cove would ultimately prevail, and that Mu Fei would head out by then! The entire plan depended on the time when Fei Mu left the captain's quarters to the combat preparation room.

There were no more combatants in the captain's quarters by then. Using the immediate darkness to his advantage, Ye Chong maneuvered Guardian and easily ended the bloodbath in the captain's quarters! Gone were the dangerous threats before him!

What Ye Chong had to do now was stop Mu Fei before he reached the combat preparation room! Without entering the combat preparation room, Mu Fei could not deploy his mech! Without a mech's protection, no matter how good Mu Fei was as a mentalist pilot, he would definitely not stand a chance against Guardian!

"Attack the enemy at his weakest when you are at your strongest!" Shang crowed, pleased with himself, and Ye Chong felt like hitting the mech in the face!

Guardian landed with slightly bent knees and pushed forward, and Ye Chong shot past the cabin door like a furious golden arrow!

Ye Chong's legs were powerful, and made even more so through Guardian's amplification! Ye Chong stepped onto the ground and pushed, and flew a dozen meters ahead, giving the illusion of Ye Chong running with a long stride!

Ye Chong was highly focused. He dared not be careless as he moved rapidly through the narrow corridors!

Mu Fei suddenly stopped in his tracks. He could hear a faint buzzing sound approaching him, and it was moving fast! He stood on alert and listened carefully. What speed! It must be above Mach 6! If it was outside, Mach 6 may not be particularly surprising, but

if there was anything moving faster than Mach 6 in the ship, it was a terrifying prospect!

Mu Fei's face turned grim!

Suddenly, Mu Fei's vision turned into blackness, and entire corridor's lights all went out!

Enemy ambush!

All of a sudden, he shouted loudly. His usually gentle eyes were now sharp as an unsheathed blade. He turned quickly and pushed to the side with both his hands while his waist bent unnaturally like a boneless muscle, effectively moving himself forcibly to the side by 30 centimetres!

His hands came into contact with something cold - it was metal! What was this thing? Mu Fei was shocked and furious! The airstream that came from the high velocity brushed painfully across Mu Fei's face!

Mu Fei felt his hands burned. While he had deftly pushed away the unknown object, his hands were significantly wounded! However, if not for his perfectly timed movement, his hands would have been gone for good! Besides, he could still feel the ghost of a sharp fin of some sort from the unknown object barely grazing past his neck, the chilling danger spread goosebumps all over his body!

In the darkness, blind to his surroundings, Mu Fei waited in anticipation. At the moment, he could only rely on his ears and instinct!

Could someone have infiltrated the ship?

Before he could consider any further, he felt another gust coming towards him threateningly. The strong sense of danger came from deep within him, and almost reflexively, he evaded to the left! At the same time, his hands pushed downwards! No mentalist pilot would ignore his instincts, and Mu Fei as an excellent one himself

strongly believed in his instincts!

Another chilling gust swept past his neck, the attack missing by millimeters! Mu Fei finally knew what was constantly threatening him with a beheading! With his rich experience, he immediately realized that it must be some kind of dagger-like weapon!

Before he could analyse any further, he heard a thump! His hands, pressing downwards, felt like they had come into contact with a mech charging straight at him!

"Ah!" He yelled from the unbearable pain! "It was metal!" This was the only thought that flashed in his mind before the pain came! Bones were exposed on his arms as the flesh came off! His hands did not seem to do anything to hinder the attack that came from beneath, because the opponent was too powerful! The other party's attack had hit his abdomen!

He felt pain in the abdomen, and Mu Fei could not help but bend forward. His mind was empty, and he could no longer think! In the confusion that followed, Mu Fei, who had never experienced such a heavy blow, suddenly felt an irrational sense of joy!

Before he could recover from the confusion, he felt a chill in his nape and warm fluid spraying onto his legs. His vision grew darker!

With his body bent forward, Mu Fei fell to the ground!

The attack he received came from Ye Chong's right knee!

In the darkness, Ye Chong could not help but be surprised. Mu Fei was truly a remarkable character. Given the dire situation, he still managed to react as he did. Without Guardian, he was probably not a match against this man! Ye Chong believed that he himself could not react against such an ambush!

The lights in the corridor suddenly came on! The corridors were illuminated brightly, with both ends of the corridor sealed shut!

Shang hastened Ye Chong, "Ye, quick, those guys can't hang on

much longer!"

Ye Chong quickly withdrew Guardian and ran to Mu Fei's corpse. Mu Fei died with his body bent forward, his arms bloody, and his neck marked with the fatal wound 10 centimeters long from a dagger. Blood was still streaming out from the wound.

Ye Chong ignored the strong scent of blood as he crouched down and began to search Mu Fei's body. Ye Chong moved quickly. In 12 seconds, he removed everything Mu Fei had on his body!

A string with a spindle-shaped pendant caught Ye Chong's attention.

"Yes, that's the one! Ye, quickly, to the combat prep room!" Shang spoke urgently, for time was crucial.

Ye Chong heard mechs approaching and threw all the other things in his bag without going through them. His hand grasped onto the pendant as he ran towards the combat preparation room. Up until this moment, everything was going as planned! Ye Chong was also confident toward Shang's plan!

The combat preparation room was where mech pilots go to before combat. The area was spacious, and pilots can deploy their mechs here and slip into their mechs. There were also plenty of supplies at hand.

In the combat preparation room, Ye Chong held onto the spindle shaped pendant and studied it for a moment before pressing gently on its tip!

All mechs that utilized brainwave controlled dimension keystones had a unique feature - whenever their user was certified as brain dead, all previous information would be wiped clean, and the mech would become a white mech!

In that moment, a light green mech appeared before Ye Chong!

Chapter 166: Bluff

This mech was most definitely modelled after a bird. As for what kind of bird it was, Ye Chong had no idea! The murky green surface was covered with a layer of light green glimmer, the result of photon excitement. Only advanced level mechs with enough energy stored would have such an appearance, just like when Ye Chong saw a similar glimmer on Mu and Shang.

Its long and thin body shape was in contrast with the usual bulky build of average mechs, and this mech appeared to be as agile as a bird.

The Sanctuary's mechs were different from the various mech models that Ye Chong was familiar with, so Ye Chong could not tell their performance, but he could still identify some features that mark the quality of a Sanctuary's mech.

For example, their mechs were always on the same level as their owners. Another example would be that their advanced level mechs were usually modelled after birds. While Ye Chong did not recognize the various types of birds, he could still identify this similarity.

The mech before him was definitely an advanced level mech from the Sanctuary, because of its wings! Ye Chong had seen those wings before, on the purple mech that appeared when he was surrounded by the MPA.

Like the purple mech, this mech had a very lifelike pair of wings! Ye Chong was not sure if they were more like lateral wings or folding wings. Like wings on actual birds, they too had many feather-like small metallic plates. Ye Chong believed that this type of wings must offer some special moves. The strong defensive abilities of the purple mech's wings from last time left a deep impression with Ye Chong!

Now that a mech like this had fallen into his hands, he would

definitely have to study it closely! Ye Chong laughed to himself at the thought.

The only regrettable fact was that now was obviously not the time to study the mech! For the moment, every second was precious and must not be wasted!

Ye Chong slipped into the mech's cabin quickly. To fly this mech, there was another issue that needed attention, and that was the initial configurations! Every white mech must undergo initial configuration before usage. It was not a step that could be skipped, or some functionalities would be barred from the user! Fortunately, this was not Ye Chong's first time doing this. His hands moved across the controls effortlessly.

The name of this mech was Overwing. Of course, Shang could not help but sneer at the odd and plain name, mocking its lack of style!

His eyes swept across the controls, and Ye Chong got a rough overview of the mech's available functions. He was very grateful, however, he had kill Mu Fei before the man himself could deploy his mech, or he might not have been able to finish him off.

Compared to other mechs, Overwing was similar to them in terms of basic maneuvering, so that would not be a problem.

The hatch that led outside opened, and Ye Chong took off with Overwing out and into space.

Just as Ye Chong left the ship, the Sanctuary had only four mechs left struggling to survive. However, none of them were retreating, a testimony to their discipline.

Overwing's appearance, however, brought a change to the battlefield!

Overwing shone with a light green glimmer all over its surface, its shiny wings spread out at the back, an eye-catching sight in the darkness of space. As the remaining four Dawn mechs saw

Overwing, they immediately felt encouraged, and managed to slightly recover their defenses against the enemy!

The Black Cove mechs saw Overwing as well, and as Ye Chong was troubling over how to deal with them, he was surprised to find the remaining 10 Black Cove mechs escaping, leaving the four heavily damaged Dawn mechs, retreating as though they had seen the Devil!

It was strange, too peculiar! Ye Chong stared at their retreating backs!

Ye Chong did not know the reputation that came with the mech he was flying, the Overwing, amongst the Three Forces! Mu Fei's Overwing was one of the Sanctuary's trump cards. Mu Fei was a modest person, and the most popular of the Sanctuary's trump cards. He was equally known for his excellent combat skills, on par with the other trump cards!

Trump cards play a very important role amongst the Three Forces! Outstanding combat skills and powerful mechs were a combination that could often decide the outcome of a battle! The Three Forces spared no effort in promoting the strength of their trump cards. Besides making them role models for others, it was also an intimidation strategy for their enemies. Legends involving these trump cards were similarly spread far and wide.

As the 10 Black Cove mechs saw Overwing, they were immediately horrified. They did not expect to see a trump card on the ship, and this was not an opponent that average mechs could hope to defeat. To stop a trump card, only another trump card would do!

Black Cove's commander in chief was also shocked with Overwing's appearance, and immediately ordered his squad's retreat. If not for his orders, they would never have escaped, an embodiment of Black Cove's strong discipline!

What was this starship up to? The commander in chief was

curious. With four of the Sanctuary's standard combat squad and a trump card, he did not believe that they were only out on a routine flight! This was obviously beyond the Sanctuary's borders, and usually they would not send such a strong battle force beyond the Orbits if not for some mission! He was also certain that they were not out for Black Cove, since his mission this time was definitely top secret. What baffled him was also the other party's active provocation. With a trump card on their side, Mu Fei in particular, how could he have waited the near annihilation of his own forces before coming out? Word was that Mu Fei was always leading the charge, showing care for his subordinates and highly looked up upon! Were the stories only fiction?

For the moment, he was occupied with many questions, but he still gave the order he thought was best, which was to retreat the ship.

The remaining four Dawn mechs all looked to Overwing, but Overwing did not move, so they could only watch as the enemy escaped! However, they could not help but feel that if they were to pursue, the enemy would be vanquished! Nonetheless, the Sanctuary's trump card had absolute authority over the mech pilots - there must be a reason for his decision! That was the conclusion of the four mech pilots.

Sir Mu Fei's mech waved, a signal to return to their ship.

They paused. Why would Sir not used the comms? However, the signal was clear, and while they were confused, the four mech pilots still flew to Ye Chong's side. They could never know that while the mech was Overwing, the pilot inside was not their respected Sir Mu Fei, but the seemingly weak young boy! It would be a crazy fact for them to take in!

The five mechs flew to the nearby ship, and as the hatch opened up, the five mechs drifted in one by one through the hatch!

The four Dawn mechs were heavily damaged, and as they landed,

the pilots immediately slipped out. The battle was intense, and they were all strung up, but now they could finally relax. While they were all highly trained, all of them now wore a tired expression! Now out of their mechs, they waited for Sir Mu Fei to come out too.

After a while, Sir still did not come out.

The four men looked towards the Overwing in confusion. As they marveled at the elegance and might of Overwing, one question still bothered them - what's with Sir?

They were still confused when four laser beams abruptly shot towards them.

On each of their foreheads was a thumb-sized hole of blood. Before the four pairs of confused and now dead eyes, Ye Chong leaped out of the pilot cabin. He stepped onto the deck as the four men fell backwards lifelessly!

At such a short distance, with so much time, even if Ye Chong's shooting skills were deplorable, and Overwing's auto shooting was far from the MPA's level, those four shots still managed to accurately hit their targets. Ye Chong even imagined that it could be due to his improving shooting skills!

The final group of people who could be a threat to him was finally dealt with.

Ye Chong exhaled deeply in relief!

The most successful part of the plan was that no one onboard the ship had time to report to the Sanctuary of what had transpired. This meant that the Sanctuary knew nothing of what happened on Glinton! This was very important to Ye Chong, since if he next meet with the Sanctuary's people, his skills as a skeleton carver could still be useful! However, he must first come up with a reasonable story of what happened!

While he believed it was unlikely for him to have anything to do

with the Sanctuary in future, it was still best to prepare for it!

Glinton flew onwards in space.

In the large space of the captain's quarters was Ye Chong, alone. Of course, Shang also came out for a breather. The room was large enough for him! Ye Chong had cleared out the bodies, and after days of internal cleansing, the scent of blood was no longer present.

The entire Glinton had only Ye Chong and Shang as its passengers. Shang controlled the entire starship, since if the ship was given to Ye Chong, he would not be able to fly it!

"What's our next step?" Ye Chong asked.

"Look for Lu Caite's teacher, cure your illness. However, we must find a planet quickly to access the virtual world, and find out where the teacher is! According to Lu Caite, his teacher seemed capable enough," Shang replied.

Ye Chong disagreed. "No, we're too close to the Orbits here, it's going to be easy for the Sanctuary to sense us, then we'll be in trouble!"

"Hmm, that's true, it's really troublesome! Looks like it's better if we go as far as possible away from this place!" Shang agreed.

"That's right! But Shang, do you have a star chart?" Ye Chong asked.

"I do, quite a few of them for beyond the Orbits!" Shang spoke proudly.

"Then we can do a warp jump?" Ye Chong asked with faint anticipation.

"Yes!" Shang replied briskly!

Chapter 167: A Slip of the Hand

"Shang, have we arrived yet?" asked Ye Chong in his Captain's seat.

According to what Lu Caite had stated, his teacher Mr. Wang Weixing could very likely be at a medical institute on Windstar. Based on the galactic layout stored inside Mu Shang's databank, Windstar should be located in the galaxy of Csebesini and it was a planet well-known for its tourism. The globe mainly consisted of attractive and poetic sceneries, frequented with intergalactic tourists who adored and appreciated the unique view of its flora and fauna.

Hence, the final destination both Ye Chong and Shang had agreed on turned out to be outer space which was three days away from the Windstar. Ye Chong would leave and trigger the self-destruct system on the ship, just to make sure that no trace would remain to guide those fearsome ones from the Sanctuary there. The location of Windstar might be extremely distant from the Orbits, but Ye Chong did not intend to let his guard down yet, as he was very much aware of the strength of the Sanctuary, their armed forces, their psychic abilities. He might not be that vulnerable to their strike, still he felt that such kind of mistake was never necessary to begin with.

"Uh... Bad news, Ye. I'm sorry to inform you that..." Shang's tone was blatantly awkward.

"What bad news? Are you going to say that the Sanctuary actually had made it here and they are just behind? No way! They can't be finding me out this quickly! Don't tell me my luck is so terrible that we bumped into one of their men in our course!" Ye Chong's expression was spelling astonishment.

"Not... Not that bad, Ye." Shang sounded like a shrinking violet, "It's just that we met a tiny... issue." Somehow the words kept

clogging at his audio system.

"Tiny problem you mean?" Ye Chong raised his brows and asked in bewilderment. "What kind of problem was it?"

"Umm... Ye. So, my calculation was a little, a little off from the actuality. Just a little." Shang sounded like a boy who tried covering up for his mistake in front of his mother after he accidentally spilled ice cream on his younger sister.

"Off? Mistake?" Ye Chong looked at Shang in disbelief, "Shang, you actually make mistakes? Stop pulling my leg!" Shang, an advanced Photon-Stimulated Intelligence, the lecturer of life, the computerized interrogator of torment, told me that he made a mistake? This is too much. Shang's calculation might not be as powerful as Mu, but it was still quite groundbreaking for Ye Chong to hear from this robotic genius admitting, declaring his mistake.

"Ahem... Ye, stop looking at me like that... I'm feeling shy you know..." The bleeping mechanical eyes of Shang blinking in blue hues with that somehow eerie tone of his, was goosebumps-inducing to Ye Chong.

"So now what are we gonna do?" The outcome was always Ye Chong's priority.

"We are currently at a course named the 'Solrivia'," stated Shang.

"How far is that from the Windstar?" This was more of his concern than the name of the orbit they were traveling on.

"Ummm..." Shang halted, "Not too far... But we can't do a direct flight there, somehow."

Ugh.

The veins bloated on Ye Chong's forehead, tried his best inhibiting his fury, he asked, "Then how long are we going to take to the Windstar on this space-jump?"

"Uhh, Ye, the issue was not the duration, rather... well, the

remaining energy on this ship was insufficient to perform the following space-jump." Shang turned back to his usual self again, not the slightest shame was felt in his words, "The distance of the space-warp this time is a bit too far. Great amount of energy would be needed for consumption!"

The bloated veins on Ye Chong's forehead pumped harshly a few times, "Shang..." Biting his teeth, "Have you ever considered confessing your so-called 'mistake' to me? Like sincerely apologetically?"

"Aw c'mon Ye, don't be so grim. You can't say no to Angela's latest photo collection. Ye, let me clarify something for you... Angela's body has got to be the best among all stars I had seen before. The curve was superb, mhmm, magnefique! Seniorita, you are the God's gift I could ever have," exclaimed Shang, like a poet by the beach, acted very much indulged in his joy, "I was calculating her figures, you know, the golden proportion of her 'curves' that makes her so flawless, so adorable, so alluring? Ye, do you know what I had gotten in the end?"

"Oh..." Ye Chong replied uninterestedly, "What you got?"

"Holy Matrimony, her body was the exact tangent and proportion of what the public considered as perfection, both theoretically and practically. It was too dramatic the moment I discovered this very truth of my life. It was shocking, as much as how the humanity reacted the moment they discovered space-travels." Shang was worked up.

"More importantly, you mean you missed on the calculation of our space-jump course just because of how astounded you were over her figures?" inquired Ye Chong calmly.

"That aside! That aside! It's just a tiny, little, minuscule problem. A very small issue," Shang's expression was lustrous to Ye Chong's eyes somehow.

"If there's a black hole here now, I would not hesitate to lob you

there," Ye Chong's wrath erupted as he sprung from his seat and made a few violent kicks at Shang.

"Ouch... Aw... Ow... the pain. The agony." Shang pulled off his cheap acting skills and whimpered along. But then he realized that would make him less assertive, "Ye, frankly speaking..." reminded Shang, "You lack an effective method of striking..."

"I ... Ugh! Don't! Ugh! Care! Ugh!" He exerted heavier force on his kick.

The weirdest moment in galactic history of a man messing with a mech ended eventually. Panting, he sat down, yes, technically, Ye Chong was the only panting one in the "fight", Shang on the other hand had his face pretty much adorned by a new set of footprints and looked like a beggar at the street.

Despite all that, Ye Chong somehow felt as if he had turned the time back when he was still on Trash Planet-12, spending his days messing with Mu, having fun.

"Shang..." Catching his breath, Ye Chong further inquired, "What's the nearest planet... now..."

"An isolated planet," replied Shang, "It is uninhabited as what I see. There's nothing on it, not even resources. So people were not even interested to develop the place."

"So are you saying that we got to wait here for another spaceship passerby?" Ye Chong sounded dejected.

"Mhm, technically. But don't worry, Ye. This course is very much populated. It has the greatest chance of encountering another spaceship. Moreover, this spaceship has a rich supply of food. So you don't have to worry about being starved to death." Ye Chong could feel his pupils rolling in the quantum singularity within his skull.

And he finally experienced what Shang meant by "very much populated" this time, by waiting... for 7 days... That was really

populated, Shang. A ship was detected on the scanner, heading towards them.

Of course Ye Chong did not spend the past 7 days having a talk with Shang, the Master of Primal Philosophy. He was performing a thorough inspection on Overwing.

Ye Chong was not aware of the fact that Mu Fei was the ace of the Sanctuary and apparently he did not seem to recognize the actual standard of this mech called Overwing he was piloting on. Other than the wings that were giving him weird vibes, the mech was full of surprises.

Ye Chong had also been spending the week getting familiar with the execution. The Overwing was certainly an excellent mech from various aspects. Ye Chong was confident to state that this could be the best mech he had ever spotted thus far, other than Mu Shang and the Guardian. Not even the extraordinary craft of skeletons like Han Jia could compete with Overwing. It even started to make Ye Chong wonder if this was the greatest invention hidden inside the Sanctuary.

The design of Overwing appeared to be rather plain from different angles. However the design seemed to be as fit as a fiddle after a bit of deduction on the figures. Ye Chong with his sharp eyes could tell the amount of efforts, the bleeding sweat of the designer imbue within this craft.

Well, Ye Chong did not perform an ultimate analysis over every inch of the mech. He just took a glance at the hologram. Time was still the obstacle to kill his leisure of doing it. Overwing was also the kind of mech forbidden from being seen by the public. That would alert the Sanctuary for sure if they were ever noticed by the people around. Ye Chong shuddered as he imagined the swarm of psychic-armed pilots chasing after him if they knew what in the world had he done. As a result, in spite of the supreme quality of Overwing, Ye Chong could barely lay a finger on the steed. No doubt, it was torturing to a mech maniac like him. It would be a far

better choice to do something else more meaningful than piloting Overwing on a big scale at the moment.

After the runaway, there remained 4 wounded Dawn mechs on the ship. Well, the saving grace was Glinton was well-supplied with tools to do pretty much anything on a mech. So Ye Chong began running his little workshop once more, repairing the 4 mechs since 7 days ago. The Dawn mechs could have been some cheapskate model after seeing Overwing the Empowered, but then a backup mech could still work very well as a backup mech. No waste, Ye Chong felt it was better to be safe than sorry.

The 4 Dawn mechs were glossing in the pink of health after Ye Chong's skillful repair.

Ye Chong's list of loots from his run did not end here. He had also acquired quite a number of precious-looking items from Mu Fei, like this strange plate for example - it was a name plate crafted with an unknown plant, filled with peculiar swirls and waves and was pierced with a silver thread. The plant must have undergone some kind of unusual finishing, as Ye Chong actually felt it warm and tender on touch! If it was not Shang who informed him that it was made out of a plant, Ye Chong would never believe that a plant could act in such odd texture, though Shang did not have any idea what kind of plant it was.

The next thing which caught his attention was a few tubes about breadth of his index finger. These tubes had one end sealed and the other opened. Some of them were packed with spherical pills, about 10 of them, while some were powder and ... sticky liquids. These were like treasure to someone who had spent his or her days on Trash Planet like Ye Chong, as he knew their value and significance, especially when this was the master medication for the Sanctuary insiders.

He kept the 5 tubes carefully within him. The tubes could be the holy light to his survival! The name plates and the other pointless-looking things were stuffed into his waist bag instead.

The entire database of Glinton had been absorbed by Shang. The best part was the database actually contained a map of the Orbits. Although it defined a tiny scope of the Orbits, Shang treasured it as much as Ye Chong treasured the tubes, as he copied it happily into his system.

The detection system of Glinton was considered to be very developed, as the detection system specialized for the spaceship did not limit its capabilities on the size of the traveling items in the scope. Hence, it was way more powerful than the detection system on most mechs.

As stated by the outcome of the detection, a long-term intergalactic travel spaceship was heading towards them sluggishly. There was still a bit of a distance so far and the spaceship did not seem to have noticed Glinton in the dark.

"What a waste of Glinton, Ye. You know, this lassie could easily sell for a gorgeous price in whichever market," Shang was remorseful as he muttered.

Ye Chong did not have the intention to comment on this money enslaved machinery though as he tapped the few switches by his side. The cabin was opened promptly. Towards the boundless space, Ye Chong, in his Han Jia, flew out. The self-destruct system had already been activated on Glinton. In 3 minutes, this spaceship would become debris scattered over the galaxy after a flare blinding the space. The Sanctuary shall never be able to find the remnants of their craft and they would never discover anything happened on it before.

The debris would be the wanderers, spreading witness of their demise!

Han Jia's speed was high by nature, so the 3 minutes were a graceful ride of Ye Chong leaving the cabin, flying far away enough to avoid the explosion. As he travelled rapidly away from the spot, his eyes discerned the glaring light behind and he knew that

Glinton had gone down. A stage increased on his velocity, Han Jia sped up once more. He would not want to be hit by the specks from the explosion.

Chapter 168: Ye Chong the Bumpkin

Bumpkin

"Captain! Look over there!" One of the crew members on S.S. Luminosity pointed at one portion of the interface as he boomed.

At one moment everyone's sight conglomerated at that particular spot on the screen.

A cluster of flare bloomed like an enchanted lotus on fire, in the midst of darkness soundlessly.

"It's an explosion... by a ship!"

"Yes sir!"

"Sigh, the members of that cruise are such a pity."

The crew members rumbled in the Captain's Room.

The captain was obviously not expecting an explosion by a spaceship on a course that had been secure the whole time. He flinched at first, but he snapped out of his astonishment quickly as he shouted, "What are all of you waiting for? Go and save the ship!" The crew members' confusion was dispelled as they hurried outside, "Look out for those pieces!" the captain added briefly.

All spaceships like Luminosity were readied with escape pods, which their outside was layered with a special kind of reinforced metal that could repel almost all sorts of rays in the space while the inside contained 30-day supply of oxygen, energy refill and water. The escape pod also had an in-built signal transmitter, which would spread SOS signals to the surrounding at all times. The escape pods were to provide an emergency exit for crew members under severe conditions. The actual function turned out to be not as great as its psychological function though, other than the sense of security exerted by this extra pathway to the outside safely, every experienced crew member is very much aware of the vastness of the space, it would be a once-in-a-lifetime miracle if

one could ever be found and rescued in the escape pod within 30 days.

Despite all that, the escape pod was still the essential facility on the space ship back then. And every spaceship crew who received the SOS signal nearby would initiate the rescue process proactively.

Within twinkling of eyes, few tens of mechs zoomed out of the cabin of Luminosity. None of those few tens mechs were combat models however.

Ye Chong had already noticed these mechs much earlier before. He avoided these mechs flawlessly. Well, Han Jia was certainly not the kind of mech that could be detected by these low-end detection system by some sailor mechs.

He came to one gate at the bottom of the ship. While standing by, Shang had already hacked into the control panel of Luminosity, since it was simply hacking elementary for Shang to get into a commercial computer system in a service ship. He did not perform anything dramatic in particular, he only unlocked the gate right before Ye Chong.

And that was how Ye Chong sneaked into Luminosity, without making a sound. Under Shang's guidance, Ye Chong successfully dodged all the crew members on the ship and directly gained access to one of the resting rooms for passengers with suave. Shang generated a new entry for Ye Chong on the passenger list in the processor of Luminosity. In a few seconds, Ye Chong had officially become the passenger on this intergalactic service craft. And Shang took a peek at their course, apparently Luminosity was not heading anywhere near Windstar. Hence, Ye Chong had to get off at a planet called Liche and took an alternate transit to Windstar.

Ye Chong found his room.

He slipped into the room instantly. Shut the door tight, he let off a sigh of relief and started taking a look around. The room was

well-facilitated from both the aspects of entertainment and living. It was quite spacious too. There were even clothing for changing readily in the wardrobe. And Ye Chong picked and changed into one of them without hesitation. The fashion style in the Orbits was utterly bizarre by nature and he did not intend to be discriminated for appearing like a weirdo from some space jail or something.

The crew members returned to their mothership after they discovered no escape pod from the debris. Doubts lingered in the captain as he wondered why a spaceship would explode on its own without any forewarning. He could not find any sound reason to rationale it either. But well if there was not a single escape pod, he let go of that thought and decisively commanded to carry on their course.

It was dinner time a moment later. Although there was no concept that would define day and night in space of ever-darkness, the habit remained rooted among most of the people, where they would head out for meals during these periods.

Frankly speaking, the taste of the food on Ginton was something to be shunned away from. Since Ginton was mostly boarded with disciplined combat members in their trainings, they would only care about the calorie of the food, never the taste.

On the contrary, Luminosity, being a service flight, did cookery so much better than Ginton. Not only they served a variety of cuisines, the food generally tasted fine too, which was such a mouth-watering experience to Ye Chong who had been taking inhumane edibles in the past as he could not hold but to chomp the scrumptious food before him. Most of the passengers on-board would prefer having their meals at the restaurant, since an intergalactic travel was known to be distant and seemingly endless and helplessly people would feel alone at times, they would adore interactions with people, which justified the populated restaurant and bars. Those were the hit places for passengers.

Ye Chong occupied the entire table alone. Towards the people

around, he was not as tensed as before. He at the moment had understood a lot of stuffs, for example the concept of the so-called "law" mentioned by people in the 5 major galaxies was apparently very effectively restrictive towards most of the folks. Unlike the Orbits, residents in the 5 major galaxies were more peace-loving. So it would be a rare sight to see something like a sudden raid or an offensive dispute between people.

Ye Chong had dipped himself in the delicious meals, showing no concern towards the people around.

His action caught the attention of the people in the surrounding. They had been having similar meals for past few weeks, even the best table of gourmet experience would feel like a stew in a canteen. And that was when they saw someone eating them in immense enjoyment. "So weird...", whispered the people. But then, soon the people shifted their focus back onto their own table, as they carried chatting with the others right next to them.

An aroma wafted through the breeze. Ye Chong lifted his face from the bowl of rice. To his surprise, a lady sat right opposite him.

Ye Chong was slightly alarmed, though he did not express it on his face.

And he heard a whistle from his head, "Wow, such a lass. Ye, how much donkey luck do you have? Why are you always bumping into beauties?" howled Shang.

Shang was not exaggerating. The lady before Ye Chong was in fact a beauty. Her face was round yet her features were distinctive; the pair of eyes were large and looked watery; her dark hair glossed like a veil of aurora on a winter's night; the curves, no doubt were eye-catching and certainly a magnet to people in sight. The critical blow she delivered was none other than the unbuttoned shirt of hers. The bustiness could be felt squeezing through the gap of that two undone buttons anytime soon. You could somehow see it, but

somehow you could not, which by then you would forget the fact that you had been staring at them the whole time.

As usual, Ye Chong did not feel anything particular about this lass. Shang had always been howling at almost every lady came into his sight. His "standards" were dubious but judging by the constant stares from the people around, he decided to take in that quality assured judgment of Shang.

He stared on, with one or two rice lumps stuck on his face. It was a little amusing.

Psh!

"Hahahahahahaha!" The lass could act in grace no longer as she burst out laughing seeing that face of Ye Chong. Ye Chong's sensitive hearing had already perceived the consecutive gasps coming from his surrounding, including Shang's, only that his expressive gasp rang in his head.

"What's the matter?" asked Ye Chong calmly. He had tried his best toning down the coldness of his tone, yet that innate coldness of his dawdled. Ye Chong did not want to attract attention and he had experienced enough to understand that his indifference had always been the culprit. To remain low-profiled, he succumbed to act normal like the other folks he had seen before.

"Ye, your muscles, the muscles of your face, too stiff. Tsk, tsk, tsk." Shang could not resist firing his sarcasm.

The veins on Ye Chong's forehead puffed up and were forced back under his skin. Act normal, he got to act normal. Damn you Shang! Cursed Ye Chong countless times.

The lady stayed silent however. Oh well, Ye Chong was not in a mood of staging himself either so he completely neglected her as he carried on gashing his bowl.

"Was it that good?" The beauty initiated. Her voice rang like the chirp of the nightingale... And it had just caused another round of

barrel gasping from the surrounding. Ye Chong lifted his face again and the beauty looked at him gleefully. Her eyes expressed curiosity and humor.

"Oh. Yes. Not bad. You could try." His face did look stiff, which caused the way he talked appeared to be awkward.

"Ye, please. Your face is cramping soon. I can see it!" Shang fearlessly continued his live commentary in Ye Chong's head.

"Why you Shang!" Roared Ye Chong in his head, which only led to a madder laugh from the artificial indulgence. Somehow he did feel his face twitching, especially after Shang had mentioned it, wondering if it was just his overthinking.

"Hahaha~"the lady giggled while covering her mouth. Her charm was such a natural captivation and Ye Chong could already speculate the next wave of gasps incoming. And as he expected, the gasps resounded tidily. Their breather intensified, with some sound of people crashing onto the floor this time.

"You are so interesting." The lady smiled joyfully and she reached out her slender arms, with a glow of a refined jade. She grabbed one stem of turnip and put into her mouth, "Hmm..." muffled, "Let me try."

D-Did she literally try it? Ye Chong went speechless as he watched the so-called beauty before her.

"Shang, did you not mention that lines like those were just out of courtesy and not reality? Why the heck did she really taste it?" inquired Ye Chong.

"She is a true beauty, even the way she eats was cute as hell, alluring as heaven! Sigh, Ye, save your words, it's just a turnip. When there's a beauty who went ahead and took the food you had bitten before, that is the moment you should be glad." The artificial indulgence was enjoying the scene.

"Glad?" snickered Ye Chong and he went quiet, eating on.

Looked at how frantically Ye Chong dined, the lady was further intrigued as she licked her fingers and giggled sweetly, "It looks really good... for some reason..." And she reached out her hands again. "Oh?" Right at that moment Ye Chong lifted his face the third time and the lady realized the entire bowl had been cleaned up. It was spotless, as if fresh from the washing machine. She flinched and exploded, "Hahahahahahaha! Ahahahahahahaha!" Bowed, she held her stomach.

The other passengers who saw the sight went dumbfounded as well. Then an outbreak of laughter occurred, "Bumpkin! What a donkey!" And Ye Chong heard it from the crowd.

Ye Chong was insensible towards these reactions. What have these to do with myself? My food are mine and it should not be invaded. It was the common characteristic among all species on Trash Planet. Don't tell me people at this place are doing it differently? Bewildered, he inquired, "Shang did I do something wrong again?"

"Haha... Oh... Hahaha... Ahahahahaha... Ye... That... That was ... That was a killer move... You know, you are a real assassin... Ahahahahaha..." The mechanical voice box seemed to be broken soon from the laughter.

Killer move it would be. I had already done it. Ye Chong reacted with honesty. I don't know her anyway, why am I sharing my own food with her?

"Kiddo! Get lost!" And that was when a fierce voice rushed in.

He turned his face over and found a few beefy guys standing at the side, staring him with a bloodthirsty look. The body was inflated with muscles and they looked threatening. There was even a guy with a large cut on the face, which made him more menacing than ever. Their eyes were filled with blatant hostility, while the so-called beauty was... acting... very... uhh... Ye Chong ran out of words suddenly. Technically, the guys came for the beauty.

The other passengers scurried out of the restaurant as they noticed the stern change of atmosphere. Only some daring ones remained to watch the show.

"Are you talking to me?" Indifferently Ye Chong said, as inside he was impressed of how calm the beauty remained despite the existence of the few hulks before her.

"Of course we are talking to you! Do you f*cking want to die so hard? Playing the dumb out of me? F*cking hell!" The leader of the hulks was enraged. Ye Chong's words failed clearly as he went on grabbing Ye Chong's collars.

The beauty who witnessed all these shrieked!

Ye Chong lowered his head and tilted his body slightly. The grab was missed. The remaining people did not notice that chilliness hidden under the lids of his eyes.

"So you are somebody who knew something eh?" The leader of the hulk was surprised while his grunts reacted alarmingly as they circled around Ye Chong.

"That would be your last meal, Mr."

"You think you're tough eh?"

Right when they were going to launch a full whirlwind combo at Ye Chong, "Nobody moves!" A chain of stampeding came behind them with a bold voice boomed.

The beauty was much relaxed upon seeing this. The security had finally arrived. The chaos ended here!

Chapter 169: We Meet Again

"Ye...", sighed Shang in his head. "What a waste of a wonderful opportunity, when you could have been the prince to save the princess from the evil brothers. Sigh, well, that was it. The golden opportunity, once-in-a-lifetime of the debut you could ever have, gone. Sigh, sigh, sigh." The cheesy words from Shang sure were sufficient material to make Ye Chong rolling his eyes like a working slot machine while lowering his head.

Let aside the debate on whether the female before her was considered a "beauty", Ye Chong had the intention to be the prince on the whitehorse to kill some possessed three-headed hulk to save a moaning princess.

Consecutive chains of footsteps came towards them. A crowd of security guards surrounded the scene, looking all eager to begin their routine execution with some of them also having a heat ray gun in each of their hands pointing at the hulks.

The gang feared of moving even a bit of their muscle. They could have been the muscular gang with outstanding fighting moves but they would never have the bravery to mess around when multiple heat ray guns were aiming.

The captain of the security team was a man in his forties. His thick pair of brows highlighted his dignified appearance, while every one of his gestures felt righteous and just. "Who are the troublemakers here?" His eyes skimmed through the folks and eventually paused at the group of beefy men.

"Hahahahahahaha!" The leader of the hulk was very much aware of the situation so he acted generously as he shrugged his shoulders in innocence, "We were just joking. We never expected the overreaction. Aw, we are so sorry!" The gang behind him was smiling gleefully along.

Karton the captain had his stern stare fixed on them. The

awkward laughter ceased completely the moment they were given the silent treatment. His sight then shifted to the only lady at the place, "Is he saying the truth?"

Twitched the faces of the gang, their expression grew nervous as they looked at the lady, anticipating. The lady hesitated for a second, "Yes." She did not seem to intend causing more unnecessary issues so she nodded her head and gave her answer.

Upon receiving her response, Karton moved his eyes back onto the gang, his voice rang profoundly, "Well if that's the case, alright, we would let it slip. But I do hope that jokes of such kind would never appear again."

"True. I do agree," the leader hurriedly approved his statement.

The storm had somehow settled while it was still a breeze, with Karton leading his men away from the scene, remaining the two person at the restaurant. While leaving the place, Karton continuously shot his sight at the gang. Ye Chong on the other hand had long disappeared before they realized. It was a happy ending, except for the gang whose faces kept twitching in dissatisfaction and unwillingness and their mouths firing rounds of vulgarities, obviously being salty over the embarrassment they brought upon themselves.

The atmosphere in the restaurant was lively again like before as soon as the gang exited the place. And Ms. Shang-Said-She-Was-A-Beauty had become the center of attention as people crowded around her, trying to please her. The lady casually greeted them while her eyes were searching for that one particular silhouette, Ye Chong. And of course he was not in the crowd, which was slightly somber to her. "Thank you. Good night," she forced a smile and scrambled back to her room.

"Well, your own blockbuster of heroic tales had gone. Ye, are you really that unfortunate with beauties? That you always missed the chance of dating them? But why do you keep bumping in to

beauties?" Shang's tone sounded confused.

Before Ye Chong could make a reply to shut him up, "Oh! It's already time to change!" Shang screamed gracelessly out of sudden, "God, what have I done to get such treatment? For you to force me out of the scene right after I encountered a charming lassie, this is the cruelest thing you could have ever done to humanity! Ye, let me tell yo-" The last syllable trailed off.

"Ye," the flat voice returned. It was Mu. Ye Chong could tell by one syllable.

"Yes, Mu. You are here, finally!" Ye Chong felt very much relieved. Shang could have been a mastermind at sometimes but he was never as reliable as Mu, like that space-jump mistake before for example. No way it would go wrong at Mu's hands! In addition, Shang's words were hardly as concise as Mu's, which was a constant headache to Ye Chong, including his anomalous approach in clarifying the problems. Those barely clarified the issues, rather it confused Ye Chong even more.

Ye Chong had a much simpler life with Mu, he was more accustomed to it. Nonetheless, Ye Chong recognized his weakness. He admitted that he would blunder in socialization, which Shang would come in handy at times. Well, the catch was, despite Shang's passionate lectures on his humanity, he probably would not have significant progression of any kind at the moment.

"It seems like Shang had given you quite some displeasure," stated Mu.

"Yeah, but he's always like that. At least he would be quieter when no lassie was around," Ye Chong confessed his belief.

"Well, he is considered the expert in this," concisely Mu concluded Shang's exceptional characteristic.

"True, true! We still need 10 more days till Rique. Then we would change to the other ship to get to Windstar. There seems to be a

ride heading to Windstar there," briefed Ye Chong the situation, though chances were Mu had already known every bit of detail he was required to know.

"Mhm, the better efficiency could be achieved by hijacking this ship and forcing them to redirect the course to Windstar instead. As stated by my analysis, the destination would be reached in only 12 days if that is the case. Furthermore, after my calculation, the success rate of hijacking the ship is above 95%!" suggested Mu a brilliant plan.

Mu and Shang are totally 2 different kinds of species!

Hijacking? That could work but then... Ye Chong scrapped the idea after pondering a little. It would be disadvantageous for him to grab all the unnecessary attention if he were to hijack. His sole purpose of boarding this ship was to get to Windstar, silently, without alarming anybody and find that teacher of Dr. Lu, known as Dr. Wang Weixing to cure this haunting disease in him, so that he could settle down at a place anonymously and spend the rest of his life being a nobody. Only if he could get back the tranquil life he once had on Trash Planet-12...

Speaking of this haunting disease, Ye Chong was being skeptical of its activity. Wondering if it was because of the progression he made in his meditation or was it the nature of the disease itself, the time frame of inactivity between each cycle had been increasing each time somehow. It had been quite a while since Ye Chong's last acting-up. He was also wondering if he had already gotten used to the pain that he could stand strong against it when it happened or the pain was in fact diminishing over the time. Sometimes Ye Chong even speculated that the syndrome could disappear all by itself as time passed.

!

He opened his eyes and woke from the trance state of his meditation. Somehow the progression this time was pretty

significant compared to before, maybe Ye Chong had not been doing it lately, so he could clearly feel that mental senses of his vibrating during meditation. Based on what that old Yin man had spat before, this should be counted as completion of the introductory level of meditation.

... which was utterly startling to Ye Chong as he truly thought he would take forever to even complete the introductory level of training with that snail development of his. And he ceased the training entirely after getting to Nine Gates City, as the mentalist and mentalist-pilot were everywhere, he dared not to perform meditation and was expecting to begin his training all over again. The reality was quite the contrary however, the progress was great. At first session after leaving Nine Gates City, he had achieved the elementary level. How could that not be startling to our Ye Chong?

He gave up figuring after a while of attempting a sound deduction for this.

Nevertheless, the benefits he got from meditating were absolutely heartfelt for him. His sight and hearing were naturally transcendent. Then the training this time had brought their capabilities up to the next level. The joyous part to Ye Chong was, his mind was clear, crystal-clear. It felt as if he was dipped in the water, chilling to the core and his dexterity improved.

Ye Chong felt the ringing coming from his stomach after waking up. A glance at the clock suggested that he had long passed the usual schedule for dining. The restaurant should be quite empty at that moment. And he headed out for food.

The restaurant on Luminosity operated all day, so you could go and have your meals any time of the day. Inside the enormous restaurant, Ye Chong stood alone. The so-called beauty was not there. What a relief. Sighed Ye Chong.

There were numerous food-supply machines at the place, which

their main body being the long rectangular metallic cabinet resting on the ground with one end as the output. A processor stood right above the output slot.

He walked towards one of the supply machines and randomly tapped a few dishes on the processor. Most of the food was never-before-tasted to Ye Chong, so why not? Beep! Soon, a tray of those food he ordered got out to the ground. He grabbed it at once and shifted to one random spot. Thup. He placed down the tray and began digging in. There was nobody else and he decided to cut those restrictive table manners and gobbled.

Right when he was enjoying the food, muffles were heard. He lifted his head and discerned a gang of men entering the restaurant, with their words shamelessly echoing within the space as they disregarded everything else than themselves. Damn. Ye Chong knotted his brows. Aren't those the gangs he faced yesterday?

It was a fateful stare he made as the gang of men was looking right into his eyes. Their eyes lustered and sprang up from the chairs they had just sat on. Snickered, they walked towards Ye Chong and covered him up partially.

Ye Chong in response only took a glance and carried on his meal as if nothing had happened before.

"Kiddo. Heh! You are all alone this time. I'll see how you're gonna escape," sneered the leader as he inched towards Ye Chong, cracking his fingers loudly with his men sneering alone.

The strange part on their script was, the boy before them had hardly shown a hint of fear as his chopsticks never stopped moving even after they had made a debut and thrown their lines. No word was heard from the boy while the tingling sound of the bowl rang. Was this kiddo freed from hunger game recently? The leader found the reaction ridiculous.

He reminisced the embarrassment he bore when he and his men

were engulfed by the security. Wrath began brewing inside him again, like a lighted match falling onto a pit of machine oil.

Hehehehe...

Hehehehehe...

The bulky men surrounded Ye Chong and could not stop sneering. Apparently they did not notice that condensed bloodthirstiness rolling inside his shrinking pupils.

"Kiddo, what a fateful encounter. You and I meet again, at the same place, right here. Hehehe!" A faked smile from the leader as his giant hands tapped the shoulder of Ye Chong. The remaining men stepped aside and anticipated the great show to begin. The puny boy was fragile by his look, slender and papery, which was perfect to be toyed and expressed dissatisfaction upon. A few of the men seemed eager to try too, obviously they wanted to join the show.

"Good bye, kiddo." The leader's hand reached for his shirt.

And their eyes blinded by a whirlwind. Before they could identify the situation, they heard an ear-piercing shriek shattering the peace in the restaurant.

Wait... Is-Isn't this voice... leader's? The men shuddered.

Simultaneously their sights converged on their leader, gasped together, their faces were drained!

To their horror, the right arm of their leader had been distorted, literally distorted, like a cinnamon roll badly fried with horrifying bones spurting from the elbow. The muscles were torn. As the blood capillaries were not harmed, only faint stains of blood tainted the bones. Nauseating it was, disgusting it looked.

The hulk miraculously was able to take the immense pain. He did not pass out right away, which was impressive for his endurance. That was also his misfortune however, as the pain seized his body, making him bow his back and grabbing his twisted arm,

whimpering with his face squeezing awfully. It was petrifying.

People were dumbfounded, completely dumbfounded!

Chapter 170: An Old Friend

The harsh scream resounded in the empty restaurant.

Plain he had looked, shocking whenever he acted - this was the principle of Ye Chong's combats, though he would prefer not slaughtering anyone for real this time. It was the moment when he would be better off staying in the dark, who knows if the eyes of the Sanctuary happened to be wondering in the craft. If he were to further dramatize the entire incident, he would be very much exposed to their discovery.

Well, Ye Chong did not hesitate making them to pay a bit of price for misbehaving however. He even made up his mind, assuming they showed stubbornness and unreasonable resistance, he would not keep his slaughter knife. At most he would just go with Mu's hijacking plan instead. Of course, that plan would not happen till the very crucial moment where he was forced to.

The men of the wounded leader finally understood the whole situation as they reacted with anger, yelling and jumping on Ye Chong. Some of them even withdrew their dagger to avenge their leader.

The cold gaze blinked within his eyes. A tip to his toes and he weaved through the crowd like a shadow. Series of audible sounds of fisting and slapping followed. Men fell all over the place like cheap sandbags.

Below average! Rated Ye Chong quickly in his mind. For someone who had witnessed the masterly barehanded combats between the Black Covers, certainly these men had terrible skills.

Everyone else than Ye Chong were curling while wailing on the ground. Ye Chong did not harm them technically like what he did to their leader. To shock the enemies, you only have to do it once. So these men were just given a touch by his fist or kick. The technique was from his stay in Black Coves back then. The

signature characteristic of Black Covers' technique was its ability to disable the mobility of enemies temporarily by deactivating certain spots of human bodies. No doubt, Ye Chong had defined the characteristic perfectly.

They were wailing on the ground, but none of them could move as part of their muscles had lost the dynamics for the moment.

Ow... Aw...

Man... Aww...

Save me...

Ye Chong sat back to his table and disregarded those annoying screams. He grabbed his chopsticks and went on taking his time finishing his meal. He had understood the fact of how each meal hardly came by back when he was on Trash Planet. No way he would prematurely end his meal because of these silly bullies, especially when wasting good food was an unforgivable sin to him.

He pushed the empty plate away from him and got up. Ignoring the wailing annoyance, he walked away.

A girl entered after that and...

Ellen covered her mouth, desperately forcing herself to not make any noises. Gosh, what the hell had happened in the restaurant just now? Why were there so many people lying on the ground? The shrill scream echoed inside her head and it was disturbing. Wait... She took a better look. Those men on the ground happened to be those malicious bullies she encountered the day before... what? Why are they lying here? And why are some of them wounded?

She observed the whining men on the ground. The first conclusion came across in her mind was shocking to her. They were hit... Yes they were hit by people, they were attacked. Such horrifying skill... The men were in total immobility... the attack even disabled their mobility... This is ... eerie...

Ellen had been quite a stunning beauty since young. And her parents employed a few combat instructors for her safety, not to protect her, but to teach her the martial arts. Throughout the years, she practiced non-stop and had changed one teacher after another. Regarding the expertise of combating, she knew it much more than the usual folks. Seizing the opponent's control by simply hitting a particular part of the body... that would be considered a rather advanced technique of combats.

And who did this? Who was the expert? Ellen's shock uncontrollably overflowed.

Coincidentally, the body of the beefy men regained the senses while she was making her deduction. One of them lifting the head spotted Ellen. Shuddered, their eyes expressed strong fear towards Ellen after regaining mobility and standing up.

Well, it was a sense of fear out of misunderstanding. They assumed both Ellen and Ye Chong were acquainted to each other, seeing how they sat together at the restaurant the day before. So, like a connected circuit, a classical conditioning, they were reminded of Ye Chong who nearly murdered them all upon seeing Ellen, which explained the shudder.

Ellen who saw them recovering gradually shut the gate of the restaurant and walked away promptly. Those might be the good fighters, but they aren't the good guys. Ellen would lose her appetite with those men inside. Though she was confused, wondering why the men expressed some kind of fear towards her.

Could the one teaching them a lesson be a friend of mine? Ellen the sensible one guessed the possibility right away. Wait... no... Nobody else had known of my whereabouts on this trip. And I had yet to bump into any acquaintances on this ship... Ellen cracked her head thinking, searching for the endless possibilities. But well, even if she dipped into the pool of probability, she would never think of how it could have been that rice-digging guy she met before.

"Mu, watch this ship properly," stated Ye Chong as soon as he got back to his room, "If you find anything, tell me right away." A plan in Ye Chong's mind, as assuming the men would not behave themselves that easily, especially after the humiliation they had experienced today. Ye Chong did not want any more incidents to happen. Well, if things had gone rough, he would go and grab the steer of this ship instantly and fly all the way to Windstar.

Providing that, he would be left with only one way to keep everyone muted of his presence in the ship. Ye Chong's eyes looked intense. Yes... that was why he refused to do the hijacking plan from the beginning, since whatever the premises were, these men were still his compatriots, his kind and Ye Chong were not the bloodthirsty kind to begin with. As long as they did not express hostility or maliciousness, he would not kill them for no reason. He did not fear murders but he disliked murders.

He took a chip from his bag and inserted it into the processor. The chip contained the entire combat sequence between the two experts he had witnessed before. Yes, the experts who got neutralized by the squad. Ye Chong and Mu had performed a series of analysis and reorganizing of movements in the visual, which eventually boiled down to this very chip, the most useful data to Ye Chong at the moment.

And Ye Chong began his training in the room. Combating was similar to piloting. One would not only be required the expertise behind the working, but also the formation of muscle memory to produce the flow of the sequences, thus an actual body training would be inseparable.

Ye Chong honed his stance when he pulled off his moves by following the analyzed data appeared in the processor. It did not take long before Ye Chong had gone fully enthralled by it, as he felt the every single change on his movement as according to the strands of data.

"Ye!" Right when Ye Chong was enjoying the process, Mu boomed

in his head.

Ye Chong flinched as he ceased his movement, "Mu, what's wrong? Did anything happen?" Mu had been monitoring the whole craft soundlessly over the course, none of the corners was missed under his mechanical eyes.

"Look. I had sent it to the processor," answered Mu.

Ye Chong shifted his sight back onto the processor, the illustrated data was replaced by a group of hologram features, playing a tape, which Mu also recorded every word uttered by the people in the feature.

"Eh? What?" Even Ye Chong the calmest guy in the galaxy could not help but to nearly shriek. He swallowed his shriek and smiled slightly, "I really did not expect him to be here. This is really unbelievable..." His thoughts wandered off with sentiments.

"Mathematically, yes. The probability is indeed extremely small," added Mu.

Settled his thoughts, Ye Chong spoke on, "Looks like they would come for us." Ye Chong was excited to be facing some sandbags soon.

"Chances are high," affirmed Mu, as he elaborated, "I did not block their access to your forged profile on the ship. They could arrive at this room effortlessly." Every passenger on the intergalactic cruise would be handed with profiles of every other passengers and Ye Chong was an "addition" to the database by Mu when he sneaked in.

Thup.

As expected, Ye Chong heard the knocks coming at the door not too long after.

Tick.

Ye Chong gave a gentle tap on the processor's interface. The door

was opened in a hush.

A group of fearsome-looking men in black suits fled into Ye Chong's room and had occupied all the potential advantageous location. The suited men stood still and no sound was heard from them. Same goes with Ye Chong, solemnly he stood there in calmness, the men were disregarded like the chilly air surrounding them.

Cough.

A moment later, a light cough came from the outside. A man taking his time made his entry to the room.

"So you were..." The man in the middle of the crowd lifted his head, with his eyes shining... glaring?

Ye Chong's expression remained unchanged, his eyes were conveying a certain degree of gleefulness.

Cough!

The head in the middle reacted quickly, as he cleared his throat again, turned to his men, "Well, head out you all. Guard for me. I have some business to discuss with this mister in front."

?

"Master." His men were in overwhelming bewilderment, aren't we supposed to come and mess with this dude? Why out of the sudden master changed his mind? We get out? Then what about our master's safety? The men were well-aware the fact that their master was utterly harmless. Upon the command, his men looked lost.

"Ahem!" The head acted displeasedly, "I said, get out! Just get out already! I don't have time to do all the mumbo-jumbo to cast you all out."

"Yes sir!" The men hurriedly exited Ye Chong's room upon the reinforced command from their leader. Tick! The door closed in a

hush after their leaving. They were astonished and almost had the urge to bang the door open again. "Shhh!" The leader of the underlings had his ear stuck on the door... There was no noise or whatsoever... It seemed fine. The leader shrugged, along with the other men, as they continued waiting by the door in wonders.

"Master!" Right after the door was shut, the head of those men approached Ye Chong femininely, "It was you! It really is you! Gosh, I did not expect to see you here! Like really I did not...", in thrill, he spoke confusingly.

It was whom Ye Chong had met before. Yes, Bai Linan.

Ye Chong took a glance over Bai Linan. The suit was a perfect fit on him, though he was still willow as before, the suit made him looked like a skeleton with a head popped out of the collar. His face was rosier however, obviously he had a much better life than before.

Meeting an old friend was also a thrill to Ye Chong too. They lost each other after the visit at the Black Coves. Too many incidents had happened after that. It felt like a travel across the dimension to Ye Chong out of the blue.

Bai Linan was stimulated to see Ye Chong, as he was the first one who truly cared about him. He actually had the intention to follow Ye Chong for the rest of his life, but he lost him on the Black Coves. He thought Ye Chong was a gone-case considering how Ye Chong was a hot-headed man. It was very likely to see him getting into a fight with one of the residents there, which caused his remorse for the following time of wondering why in the world he suggested to separate in the first place. If it was not for his brilliant idea, Master Ye Chong would have been there.

But they met again.

"Master... My Lord...", Bai Linan was choked with tears.

Ye Chong's expression remained calm, though it was causing a

fissure in his mind.

Chapter 171: Accompaniment

Bai Linan had been patiently waiting for Ye Chong's reappearance on the Black Coves back then. He spent every single coin Ye Chong had left in his pocket soon after and inevitably he had to find a living on his own somewhere in this black market. Fortunately many of the wealthy merchants frequented the exterior of the Black Coves and Bai Linan, as quick-witted as he was, got the heart of the merchants. Well, he was eventually a strategist, one who was familiar with buttering-up and providing services to the superiors. It did not take long before Bai Linan won over the head of the Sylvia Group, Mr. Robert. He gained Mr. Robert's trust gradually and became the butler at his place. He aimed the right merchant since Sylvia Group was a major spaceship production group.

Mr. Robert fancied the entertainment on the Black Coves a lot and Bai Linan, being his man, had been visiting the place regularly.

Well, he met his lord, the meaning of his soul after much detour, once again.

"My lord, so you're heading...", inquired Bai Linan.

"Windstar," concisely Ye Chong replied.

"Ah? Really? Great! Wise people sure think alike, my lord! We are heading the same way!" Bai Linan was surprised. "My men and I do intend to go Windstar from the beginning!" Although having no idea why Ye Chong wanted to go to Windstar, the witty willow guy did not ask. At least he was very sure that Ye Chong could never be going there for sightseeing, even if Windstar was known for its tourism.

"My lord, my master, my..." Bai Linan haltered out a few words, "How about..." Ye Chong's gaze intensified, "Hahahaha..." As forced by the terrifying gaze, he spat everything, "My lord, what I mean is... how about we... we walk together?" He regretted his

words the very second he uttered them. Droplets of sweats rolled down his back for some reason. Why am I this nervous? I am this nervous only when I'm meeting authorities like Mr. Robert...

He had witnessed Ye Chong's mighty capability in combats before. So his safety would be absolutely guaranteed as long as he walked with Ye Chong by his side. Well, if it was not some accidents before, his safety would be extra guaranteed by taking private transport.

He was well-aware that his lord Ye Chong was not fond of the buzzes around him. So he was not confident of his suggestion of accompaniment.

The catch was, Ye Chong nodded his head, "Okay," calmly his word went.

"So you agreed, my lord?" Bai Linan's eyes enlarged, as if he misheard something.

"Yeah," Ye Chong nodded once again.

The next few minutes, Bai Linan was still under the stunning spell of Ye Chong's reply. He could not believe his ears as he did expect Ye Chong reacting coldly and turning down his offer. That would be more of a Ye Chong behavior.

Ye Chong did not simply accept the offer, he had his own thoughts too. Staying with Bai Linan meant a kind of camouflage to his identity. He seriously needed camouflages these days especially after the raid of the Black Coves on Blue Ocean planet back then where they made a total seize of transpiration through medias and laws. The way of how effortlessly Black Coves took over the entire governmental system with one move convinced Ye Chong the lesson that any man, even with the mightiest strength, would become minuscule and helpless in front of the majority.

Ye Chong followed Bai Linan.

"My lord, please stay here for the moment. This is my room. No

worries, no one would disturb you." Bai Linan escorted Ye Chong to his room.

Ye Chong viewed the room. It was a pretty majestic room. The floor carpeted with the skin of the organic lifeforms in scarlet, dimly lit by the yellowish lamp. The extravagant style made Ye Chong frowned and glanced at Bai Linan. How I never knew Bai Linan was such a ... "Uh!" Blushed Bai Linan upon Ye Chong's glance, as he coughed briefly and spoke, "This was just some acting, basic acting, camouflage you know? Can't help it."

Ye Chong did not comment on his reasoning as he shifted his stare away. Bai Linan was a bit embarrassed.

"My lord, you would be addressed as my bodyguard, is that fine?" asked Bai Linan carefully.

Ye Chong signaled approvingly. It did not matter to him. Bodyguard... the title reminded him of Gu Shaoze and his blonde bodyguard Number 2. He knew that Bai Linan could never treat him as a real bodyguard, though he would most likely take action if he saw Bai Linan in danger.

Bai Linan was relieved seeing how Ye Chong did not seem to have an objection. He did have a tiny scheme in mind but he could not inform his head regarding Ye Chong's existence. He understood their personalities. His head would never let go of a talent like Ye Chong while Ye Chong was never the kind who would bow before someone. Oh the contrast... it was frightening for him to imagine both parties having conflict.

"Take a seat, my lord, take a seat," pleaded Bai Linan. Ye Chong sat. The fluffy couch nearly engulfed him, which was a bit distressing to his unfamiliarity. Such fluffiness he could not exert force on would easily lead him to a helpless situation on an emergency for not being able to react quickly and properly.

"Ah Duan, go bring Tie Wu," grabbed a communicator, Bai Linan ordered.

Not too long later, the screen at the side of the door displayed visual of a man who spoke courteously, "Boss, I had brought you Tie Wu." Soon after the last syllable he spoke, the door opened automatically.

Two suited bulky men stepped into the room together.

Ye Chong raised his brows slightly, he recognized one man with his right arm bandaged, that was actually the man he nearly crippled at the restaurant, yes, the leader of the hulks.

"Boss, I present you, Tie Wu," spoke Ah Duan politely.

"Oh," responded Bai Linan, his expression was indiscernible under the dim yellow light. Ye Chong on the other hand was watching Bai Linan to put up his show.

"Tie Wu...", flatly Bai Linan spoke.

"Boss!" The fearsome-looking Tie Wu was acting like a sweet little lamb in front of Bai Linan.

"Umm, Tie Wu my man, this guy beside me, is actually a friend of mine. It's just some misunderstanding... Well, why don't we let this go? How do you think?" Bai Linan's tone was more like a discussion than an order.

Tie Wu raised his eyes at Bai Linan and glanced through his eyes' corner at that soundless Ye Chong at his side. He quivered as he lowered his head, "Tie Wu shall obey the order without doubts!"

"Hah... Well then, we shall forget about this. We should be friends than foes. We would have plenty of times working together in future. We should celebrate, especially when it was hard to see a forgiving Tie Wu. Ah Duan... Oh Ah Duan..." Bai Linan looked very satisfied.

Ah Duan hurried to the front and bowed. Bai Linan then stated serenely, "Tie Wu sure took some venom this time... very well, Tie Wu shall take over the transportation task next month. Go and do the necessary changes for me, would you?"

"Yes sir!" Ah Duan's tone was serious.

Tie Wu was madly joyful, "Thank you my boss, thank you for your recognition! Tie Wu shall perform your order flawlessly!"

Bai Linan was delighted seeing how Tie Wu was being so understanding, "Hahaha, Tie Wu, just remember to not make any troubles there. Well, it's time for both of you to go," waved Bai Linan, gesturing them to head out.

The two men bowed in courtesy and they left. Ye Chong witnessed the entire scene of Bai Linan acting like a boss. It looked like Bai Linan was in fact having a good time under Mr. Robert. Ye Chong was intrigued as he fixed his eyes on Bai Linan.

Bai Linan's face blushed again upon the door closing, seeing how odd Ye Chong's gaze was, "Heh... That was just acting, yes, just acting!"

Bai Linan came into the industry as a space pirate so he habitually kept the preference of employing those fearsome-looking kinds to be his underlings even after becoming Mr. Robert's butler. It was rather fortunate that Bai Linan was wise in controlling these beasts to listen to his words, while Mr. Robert gave him ample trust. So his men would obey his orders wholeheartedly.

So, Ye Chong nominally became Bai Linan's bodyguard and spent the days mostly in the room. Bai Linan was also a great planner, so he knew what to do on whatever occasion by nature.

Ye Chong was using a pseudonym, Wang Xing in the ship. Technically he removed the Wei from Wang Weixing in the database, which was why Bai Linan did not recognize Ye Chong in the first place.

Ye Chong observed his men daily. Bai Linan did have an actual gang under his command and he was confident to say that they had seen more blood than sweat. Ah Duan was probably the one who

left the deepest impression in him. He was young but he did his work steadily and very maturely. He was considerate in all aspects, that even Ye Chong the one who lacked the society common sense pinpointed his talents in this. Well, Ah Duan also happened to be Bai Linan's most trustworthy man.

Throughout the observation these days, Ye Chong realized the authority in the hand of Bai Linan. It was very great. And regarding that head of his, Mr. Robert, he had never seen him in person. Ye Chong did not have interest on him however. He solely wanted to head to Windstar silently.

Nothing happened throughout the journey.

The underlings of Bai Linan were all aware of the existence of a master martial arts by their boss's side, who also happened to be an old friend of his. And he had become the personal bodyguard. They did not really see the power of Ye Chong, but the injury he caused to their leader was truly horrifying, despite how they had seen more deaths than injuries. Such a cruel person, and he was a good friend of the boss, staying in his room day by day... no one would dare enough to knock on the door to mess with Ye Chong and get into trouble, seeing how closely Ye Chong and their boss were related.

Today they had arrived by Rique the planet. And they heard of someone visiting Mr. Robert.

Ye Chong in his black suit was feeling awkward of his unfamiliar apparel. Such kind of clothing was not appropriate for movements... Ye Chong carefully tried doing a few moves he usually performed. It looked ridiculous as hell. In the timeframe of less than half an hour, he had already torn like 10 suits. He would destroy a suit averagely every 3 minutes, and it shocked Ah Duan who witnessed everything to death. Ye Chong's strength was too overwhelming for the clothing. Accidentally he would wave his limbs too much and the clothes would tear like a shredded paper, with a huge gap in between.

At least Ye Chong started to get familiar with this absolutely inconvenient clothing, as his action grew more natural.

Ye Chong in his suit had discarded the restrictiveness before, which was amazing to Ah Duan.

Ye Chong was born with a outstanding physique, with the suit he would appear more classy. Well that would only be applicable if one were to watch it from the back. Shifting the camera to the front would make anyone disregard the statement before, Ye Chong would be impossibly equalized to classiness. Ye Chong's face was not handsome to begin with. Still, that calmness of his, with that coldness from the inside was a killer charm to the ladies. His arms were odd too, they were slender, the training before still did not give him any bulges he was supposed to get. Perfectly sculptured, like a masterpiece.

Absolutely, a sophisticated prince from the aristocrats!

Ah Duan looked in disbelief at Ye Chong who somehow had undergone some sort of witchcraft and transformed completely.

Beep! Beep!

Ah Duan quickly connected the ringing communicator, the screen projected the visual of Bai Linan, "Boss!" bowed Ah Duan rushingly.

"Yes, Ah Duan, are those men ready?" asked Bai Linan.

"Yes, all ready," hurriedly he replied.

"Mhm, alright. We are stopping by soon. Call them to prepare the things. We can't get it wrong this time. Our head's security is the priority and it should be impeccable. Understand?" grimly Bai Linan gave his order.

"Yes sir!" Ah Duan's expression turned grim too.

"Also, how was Wang Xing's preparation?" inquired Bai Linan.

"I think..." He took a look at Ye Chong who was walking in his

suit around in the room, "He should be almost ready."

"Mhm, okay. He is not experienced in this, please give him some attention, okay?" stated Bai Linan.

"Yes sir!" replied Ah Duan.

Chapter 172: The Beauty, Shang Xin

The long distance passenger starship Luminosity entered the docking zone of planet Richie, and landed smoothly. Hatch 29 opened, and out came a large troop of well built men in black suits. Once they left the hatch, the men immediately secured strategic locations around the area. Their overbearing look drew more than a few glances from the other passengers exiting through the other hatches.

There were already some people waiting outside, and they seemed to be very concerned of Robert's safety. The area was crowded, and Ye Chong even noticed a few discreet guards in the shadows.

Duan brought Ye Chong along to meet the other party. Bai Linan had asked for Duan to take care of Ye Chong, and Duan decided that bringing Ye Chong along by his side was a better option.

The other party was here for a woman. The woman was around 25 years of age, her beautiful countenance was matched with a cold expression, and her chilling eyes looked as though they could see through anyone. She was tall and slender, her combat uniform wrapping fittingly around her hot and voluptuous body. This combination of fire and ice made one's heart throb!

Duan and Ye Chong approached.

"Good day, I'm Duan, person in charge for Mr Robert's safety!" Duan extended his right hand.

"Good day, I'm Shang Xin, person in charge for Mr Robert's arrival here and his safety on Richie! Welcome to planet Richie! I hope that you will cooperate with us for this mission to ensure Mr Robert's safety!" The voice was clear and soothing, but tinged with a condescending undercurrent that made one uncomfortable!

Duan's expression changed a little. "I believed Ms Shang must

have misunderstood, Mr Robert's safety is our responsibility!"

Shang Xin's cool countenance turned slightly cynical. "Oh, is Mr Duan not confident of our abilities? We're familiar with the ins and outs of planet Richie, my subordinates are all elites, so Mr Duan, please rest assured, that incident with Robert a few days ago will never repeat itself!"

Duan's expression immediately turned grim. Shang Xin was referring to the attempt on Robert's life last time. An assassin had managed to slip through the guards outside, but fortunately was discovered by their employer's bodyguards. A tragedy was avoided! The incident was a humiliating one for Duan, and now that someone in the same profession had spoke of it right in his face, Duan was inevitably affected!

Shang Xin ignored Duan and activated her comms. "All units in your position, report any abnormalities to me!" She gave no attention to Duan.

Duan activated his comms grimly. "Everyone ready!"

Ye Chong observed the two with interest.

Duan's subordinates quickly moved to their positions, but their choice of locations often overlapped with that of Shang Xin's subordinates, and the bodyguards from both two sides could only stare at one another in contempt.

Some of them had already deployed their mechs and slipped into the pilot cabins, examining the surroundings carefully. Nearby tourists noticed their demonstrations and quickly scrambled away.

Ye Chong trailed behind Duan. These men may normally look like the average gangsters, but they now performed like professionals. Their choice of locations and the cooperation between them were of high standards.

However, after witnessing the Sanctuary's astonishing cooperation and unmatched teamwork, this standard of

performance was not enough to impress Ye Chong anymore! Besides, Ye Chong already noticed two openings, and could not help but begin to consider the ways he could avoid these men and reach his target.

Shang Xin's fair countenance betrayed nothing, but she was secretly surprised to find that the other party was as capable as her own team in their profession. Could the assassin really be that good? She was beginning to feel curious about it.

Through it all, Shang Xin did not even acknowledge Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was actually Bai Linan's bodyguard, and should be by Bai Linan's side now. However, since Bai Linan was accompanying Robert at the moment, Ye Chong had followed Duan and disembarked from the Luminosity.

Soon, the security teams were in their positions, and did not observe any abnormalities. Duan immediately reported to Bai Linan.

It was only then that Robert emerged from the hatch.

Four bodyguards wearing miniature mechs surrounded Robert, and Bai Linan followed from behind.

Ye Chong noticed the four miniature mechs, and was startled!

The four miniature mechs did not stand out in particular, but what grabbed Ye Chong's attention was the way these four men moved in their miniature mechs! Ye Chong could not see the pilots themselves, but he could make out their steps! These miniature mechs were not much taller than the average human height, so they looked more like four armored bodyguards!

That was precisely why Ye Chong could see the way they march forward clearly!

Double Curved Steps!

Curved Steps were common. It was a basic footwork technique

for mech pilots, and an evasion measure! However, Double Curved Steps were entirely different Curved Steps! Double Curved Steps was a type of footwork meant for combat. Since it was usually comprised of two oppositely directed Curved Steps, it was called Double Curved Steps, and was known for its unpredictability!

Ye Chong did not know if other schools of battle techniques taught this footwork, but he knew one of them definitely did - Black Cove! Ye Chong had learnt this footwork from Black Cove himself! Till this day, Ye Chong had never seen anyone aside from Black Cove's men using this kind of footwork.

Ye Chong suspected that these four bodyguards in miniature mechs were from Black Cove! He thought of escaping immediately, since if they were indeed from Black Cove, he would be done for!

Just then, one of the bodyguard's vision swept past Ye Chong, and he detected it immediately with his sharp senses. He groaned on the inside. If the other party reacted, he would deploy Guardian and flee!

However, as the bodyguard saw Ye Chong, he did not have any noticeable reaction. From his discreet observation, Ye Chong also believed that the person did not recognize him! At the same time, Mu's words affirmed his suspicions. "Ye, that person doesn't know you. When he saw you, his pulse and breathing were normal!" Mu's conclusion was very trustworthy!

Could they not be from Black Cove?

It was possible. Black Cove's instructors did not say that Double Curved Steps was unique to Black Cove. Who knew if other schools had it. "I'm probably just being paranoid," Ye Chong mocked himself. The other party's eyes did not fix onto him, and Ye Chong sighed in relief. However, he still maintained a state of high alert. If anything happened, he was getting out of there!

Another thing that surprised Ye Chong was the way the imaginative way in which the four bodyguards executed the

Double Curved Steps!

The two bodyguards flanking on each side stepped in different directions, but with some form of rhythm. The distance between the two of them closed in and widened in a seemingly irregular way, but with some hidden rhythm behind it. This made Robert's exposed location difficult to predict. Besides, the bodyguards would make small movements like raising their hands or leaning their bodies to interfere with potential shooting attacks! For the shooter, this would interrupt with their timing and greatly decrease the accuracy!

With this, Ye Chong believed that these four bodyguards could still be from Black Cove, since their abilities were too similar to that of Black Cove! Such capable people reminded Ye Chong immediately of Black Cove! However, if they were from that place, why did they not recognize him? Perhaps they were really from somewhere else.

Ye Chong became undecided about the origin of these four bodyguards!

Duan brought Ye Chong along to approach them, with Shang Xin following behind.

Robert was in his forties, his skin well cared for, but strands of white hair marred his image of youth. He wore a long brown windbreaker, and looked like an ordinary man.

Duan bowed to Robert, and Ye Chong could only follow suit. With such a close distance between them, Ye Chong still did not recognize any peculiar movements from those four bodyguards.

It was Robert who actually gave Ye Chong some attention. "This one looks like a stranger to me, I don't think we've met." At the back, Shang Xin heard those words and was mildly alarmed.

Bai Linan immediately interrupted from the side, "This is a friend of mine, we used to work together. I was afraid he might not know

the rules here, so I let Duan here be in charge of him." Bai Linan did not anticipate that by asking Duan to take care of Ye Chong, Duan would actually bring Ye Chong by his side. This was the thing that Bai Linan was trying to avoid at all costs. If his employer got interested in his Master for some reason, attracted by his talent, and wished to keep Ye Chong with him, it would be disastrous!

While he did know Ye Chong for quite some time, Bai Linan was aware that Ye Chong was the kind of person that would never yield. Asking Ye Chong to work for someone else was impossible! Besides, as he recalled how Ye Chong liked to use violence to solve all manners of problems, it would raise havoc if he ever came into conflict with someone like his current employer!

Bai Linan groaned inside. He could only pray that something like that did not happen, or else, the result would be unimaginably catastrophic!

"I see!" Robert nodded inconsequentially, and Duan immediately pulled Ye Chong with him and stepped to one side.

"Shang Xin is here by the orders of Lord Zhang Ming to welcome Mr Robert. Lord Zhang Ming is currently unavailable due to unexpected circumstances, and had asked me to express his sincere apologies!" Shang Xin bowed to Robert.

"Haha," Robert laughed heartily, "To see a beauty such as Ms Shang makes one happier than seeing Zhang Ming himself! I've heard that Ms Shang is a famous beauty on Richie!"

"You're too kind!" Shang Xin smiled plainly, as if she did not notice the teasing words. She slightly inclined and stretched her hand out. "This way please, Mr Robert!"

Robert was not offended by Shang Xin's lack of response, and laughed again as he stepped forward.

Suddenly, Ye Chong's face twitched.

Something unusual happened!

Chapter 173: At the Edge of Life and Death

A loud explosion was heard, mixed with countless screams of terror. There was an explosion somewhere ahead, where Shang Xin's subordinates were covering. Ye Chong could feel the ground shake.

Shang Xin's face ashened!

The men around Robert were all veterans, and did not express any fear. They knew that it was important to stay calm for the moment, as to not provide an opening for the enemy!

Robert only reacted minutely, his pupils contracting slightly!

The bodyguards reacted instantly. When the explosion happened, they immediately moved closer to Robert for additional protection. The two mechs in front of Robert stood shoulder-to-shoulder, blocking off the debris that flew away from the explosion.

Shang Xin and Duan deployed their mechs almost simultaneously.

Shang Xin's was a Shadow Phoenix-III. Unlike the Shadow Phoenix-II, SP-III was a battle mech in the SP model series. This meant that its long range attacks were not particularly spectacular, but it excelled at close range combat. With a parrying spear made of a special alloy and two laser daggers, coupled with a higher speed compared to the SP-II, the SP-III had a unique battle strategy. It would retreat whenever an attack missed and wait for the next opportunity. It also inherited the unique exterior from the SP series. With a small and agile body, incredible speed, and close range battle specs, the SP-III was a mech assassin!

Duan's mech was the complete opposite. His mech was in alternating shades of red and black. This classic color combination made it more like a display mech, and not a battle mech. However,

Ye Chong could still identify the impressive aspects of this mech! It was definitely a modified mech. Its equipped weapons were strange - besides the abnormally large modified laser sniper rifle in its hands, there were no other guns or close range weapons! Ye Chong had never seen such an extreme way of equipping a mech. Even the MPA's mechs would have weapons such as daggers in hand. Ye Chong could not make anything of the rifle, but the engine was at least recognizable. It was a Split Wave - a photon driven engine, one of the best engine models available in the market, though it came with a hefty price tag!

These two mechs immediately sheltered the rest of the people! They were now the perfect cover against the blast.

Duan and Shang Xin immediately gave the order to lower the rope ladder, but as the ladder slowly unfurled itself downwards, they grew anxious. They could not climb into the mech's pilot cabin by hand like Ye Chong.

Mech pilots were strong, but before they entered the pilot's cabin, even a ray gun of the smallest caliber could end their lives!

Just then, Mu suddenly spoke up, "Ye, be careful! Someone used an electro-interference grenade!"

An electro-interference grenade? Ye Chong was alarmed! He did not always know about weapons like these, but after having Yu Di with its assortment of weird but powerful ancillary weapons, the unexpected effects of using these weapons piqued Ye Chong's interest in them.

Electro-interference grenades were used for magneto-interference within a small effective perimeter. It could render all electronic communications within the perimeter ineffective, but it had a few weaknesses, such as its discriminatory effect, short effective time and small range. These three weaknesses limited the weapon's applications in the field.

Shang Xin and Duan noticed the weapon as well, and exchanged

an uneasy look. However, the rope ladder was moving too slowly, and they could only wait anxiously.

The haze from the explosion engulfed the area. Dust and debris was everywhere, and no one could see anything!

Mu suddenly shouted, "Ye, careful, 20 high explosive grenades!"

The miniature mechs' scanning systems also picked up the 20 high explosive grenades that came crashing down like rain! If any of the 20 grenades exploded, no one but the four bodyguards in miniature mechs could hope to survive!

In dire situation, the four bodyguards around Robert suddenly leaped up and out of the haze at incredible speed, like four launched cannonballs. They pushed downwards and jumped high up into the air.

Everyone was focused on the four of them! However, their confused expression showed that they did not understand what was happening!

Right then, as Ye Chong stared at the four figures above, Mu suddenly spoke urgently, "Ye, 72 degrees from the radius vector!"

Ye Chong reacted immediately, absolutely trusting Mu. Just as Mu finished, Ye Chong turned and suddenly found a bone-chilling light flashing into non-existence on the top of a tall building, some 60 meters away!

Ye Chong immediately felt goosebumps all over him, sensing something, but the intense feeling of danger did not make him lose his calm! Without identifying what it was, Ye Chong reached for the exterior of his thigh!

Swish! Ye Chong put all his strength into the throw of his dagger from his thigh!

At the same time, the four bodyguards in the air demonstrated their magnificent prowess, kicking or slamming away the grenades, and none of the 20 high explosive grenades met their

intended target, all flung off into the distance!

Boom! Boom! Boom! A series of explosions were heard. The shock waves from the 20 high explosive grenades pushed from all directions, and people stumbled in confusion and fear. If the explosion had happened where they were, all of them would have burned into dust!

Ye Chong's expression was unaffected. The violent explosions did not perturb him. When the explosions went off, he could see clearly a flash on the building from something that was cracked!

"Threat neutralized!" Mu's voice was heavenly, and Ye Chong relaxed!

Shang Xin's face was pale!

The problem had arisen from her side. Three of her subordinates were replaced with enemy personnel! From when she first took up her current position, her perfect record of service was finally broken, and the enemy had nearly succeeded! What bothered her the most was that the ones who managed to diffuse the situation were all Robert's own men! Now, whenever her eyes met Duan's, she could almost feel some unvoiced repeating ridicule towards her!

The target of the attack, Robert himself, looked calm. He was speaking to Bai Linan casually, his composed demeanor bespoke his status as a person of power.

Robert studied Ye Chong for a moment and smiled. "I didn't expect this young man to be so skilled. If not for your actions, this aging life of mine would have ended today!" These words brought a violent tic to Shang Xin's face, but as she recalled her own failure this time that almost led to the loss of everyone's lives, her expression darkened further!

For the moment, Ye Chong looked comedic. A large patch of cloth was missing from his suit pants on the outer part of his right

thigh, and a dagger's sheath was visible through the hole. His suit was ripped open on both sides beneath his armpits, exposing his white shirt underneath. If he were on the streets, his look would invite roaring laughter from spectators. Now, however, everyone was looking at Ye Chong with great respect!

Ye Chong's calm, unperturbed expression combined with his damaged outfit made him distinctly stand out!

"You're too kind, sir!" Ye Chong still remembered that he was supposed to be Bai Linan's bodyguard, and did not break his cover. Seeing Ye Chong's plain demeanor, devoid of any excitement due to his achievement made Robert even more impressed! Bai Linan, however, was writhing inside. He was always good in reading people, and knew exactly what that look in his employer's eyes meant! It seemed that what he was trying his best to avoid what was happening!

"Brother Wang, your dagger!" A guard handed over Ye Chong's dagger back to him reverently, his expression full of respect!

Strong people were always respected, no matter the place! In that moment, without time to deploy Guardian, Ye Chong had threw out his dagger with all his might! When the explosion stopped, Ye Chong called for one of the guards to search the enemy hiding on top of the building he aimed at. More accurately speaking, he was to search for the enemy's body! The dagger was embedded deep into the enemy's forehead, a high accuracy laser sniper rifle on the ground before him with its smart targeting device shattered into pieces!

An image came to everyone's mind - a dagger swishing into the air, accurately finding the laser sniper rifle's smart targeting device. In that instant, the smart targeting device scattered into pieces, its fragments falling to the ground like heavenly petals. Nonetheless, the device did nothing to reduce the dagger's speed, as it struck mercilessly into the forehead of the enemy sniper, granting instant death!

Someone had secretly measured the distance between the enemy sniper and Ye Chong, and reported a whole 68 meters!

With a distance of 68 meters, how could one throw a weapon with just his right hand and hit a target dead-on, killing the enemy? The amount of strength and accuracy required was shocking! Physical training was essential for most mech pilots, but no one had imagined that someone could reach such a staggering level of ability!

As for Duan and Shang Xin, who were both present at the scene, they knew even more!

Only both of them knew how powerful Ye Chong's attack actually was! The parietal bone at the forehead was very hard, penetrating this was itself an astonishing achievement! Moreover, they found another neglected detail, which was that the enemy sniper was actually found a whole meter away from his actual hiding spot, in the direction of the attack. There were obvious scuffing marks on the ground!

Duan and Shang Xin came to the same conclusion at almost the same time - the dagger had plunged into the enemy's forehead and, with the excess momentum, pushed the enemy's body backwards for a whole meter!

Duan and Shang Xin both noticed this detail at the same time, and arrived at the same conclusion almost simultaneously. They looked to each other, and found the same horrified look in the each other's eyes!

With that, both of them left the scene wisely!

The enemy's plan was almost perfect. They already had the bombs in place before Shang Xin's subordinates moved into position at the docking zone. The bombs were not meant to kill Robert, but only to create confusion! At the same time, the ambushers used their electro-interference grenades under the cover of the bombs, hence Shang Xin and Duan were plunged into

confusion due to the communication block. One of the ambushers then threw out 20 high explosive grenades amidst the chaos. These grenades were also not their final attack, and were only used to move the four bodyguards in miniature mechs away from Robert. The real killing strike was supposed to come from the now lifeless sniper, lying on the ground!

They still could not figure out how Ye Chong found him out. Was it by chance? Or did he have some special methods? Everything happened in a very short time, and the act of discovering the enemy and retaliating was too unlikely to happen without earlier preparation! Could this be a trick by the enemy? Duan lifted his head abruptly at the thought, but found his eyes meeting Shang Xin's!

However, Wang Xing was an old friend of the manager, and had saved their employer's life this time. Whatever suspicions he had, Duan decided to keep it to himself.

In the end, the enemy's assassination plot was perfect, but without a perfect ending! The timing and cooperation were well executed, and if not for the monster that was Wang Xing, the ending would have been very different!

What disturbed them both deeply was the enemy's preparatory works. How did they find out Robert's schedule? How did they infiltrate as Shang Xin's subordinates? From the enemy's movements, it seemed that they had strong control over the events, and seemed to understand who they were against. However, Shang Xin's and Duan's side knew nothing about the enemy. Their identity and the reason for the attacks were still unknown! None of the three ambushers in this attack survived!

Shang Xin's dignity had received an unprecedented blow. Her subordinates were compromised, and she herself was not aware of it. As for the rest of her team, she could not guarantee their loyalties! It was terrifying!

There were heavy casualties from the encounter this time, mostly due to the 20 high explosive grenades! The scene before them was a hopeless mess!

Both of them kept their silence, deep in their own thoughts!

"Young man, since you're an old friend of Nan, you're one of our own. From now on, you'll be the team leader for all the guards!" Robert announced suddenly with a warm smile. His gentle tone, however, did not allow for objections, and his eyes were looking straight at Ye Chong.

Shang Xin and Duan were both surprised. They did not expect Robert to make such a decision.

Bai Linan felt like fainting. Heavens, they're all done for!

Chapter 174: First Visit to the Shang Family

"Thank you for the offer, Sir, but I'm only travelling with Nan because it's on the way to Windstar, I will be departing once we reach there!" Ye Chong explained frankly. While he thought it too much of a hassle, Ye Chong still made the effort for Bai Linan.

Robert looked at Ye Chong, more impressed than ever. The young man was calm and modest, humble despite his achievement - he was definitely full of potential!

"Windstar? So you actually have business in Windstar, what could it be? If you have any problems, don't hesitate to let Nan know, I have some influence on that planet!" Robert said smilingly.

"Thank you for your concern, Sir!" Ye Chong thought these social etiquettes were a bore, but unfortunately, they were a cultural norm.

"Haha, you're part of the family, don't worry about it!" Robert laughed heartily. Only Bai Linan, who knew his employer well, understood that his employer had no intention of giving up on Ye Chong. Based on his experience, his employer would probably come up with something else later. That thought was enough to make him groan inside. He could only hope that his employer's tricks do not offend Ye Chong, or Ye Chong would probably kill again, as he was inclined to!

Due to heavy casualties suffered by the security team, Shang Xin's requested backup arrived in just a few minutes. The grand formation of mechs garnered the attention of passersby's, looking up towards the sky. Other mechs in the air gave a wide berth to the mechs, and were very much surprised. Were these not mechs from the Shang family? They were all battle mechs! What made this aggressive defense necessary? How could anyone on planet Richie still dare to meddle with the Shang family?

The people in the city gossiped about the possibilities, and

insiders who recognized that the mechs were all elite guards of the Shang family concluded that something serious must have happened! Intel was sought and shared throughout the city!

The mech security team of the Shang family came faster than the police. The violent battle had terrified all the passengers who were disembarking from other hatches, and most of them had called for the police!

Once they arrived, the mech security team of the Shang family brought the situation under control. Shang Xin also performed capably, and Duan was impressed by these members of the same profession.

Shang family's security team took charge of the docking zone, and began to assert authority over the people present. This exercise, however, was repulsive to everyone not of the Shang family. Robert shook his head as he observed the security team's arrogance. While the Shang family was now a wealthy entity, it was still far from being an aristocratic family. The subordinates were all behaving like upstarts, very different compared to even some wealthy families with some history!

The police finally arrived and, after some discussion with the Shang family, agreed to let the Shang family continue on. This made Robert realize the profound influence of the Shang family on Richie!

Soon, under the escort and protection of a large team of mechs, Robert and his company arrived safely at the Shang family. However, Robert's intention for a low-profile visit was now turned into a huge affair.

Shang Zhangming, the current head of the Shang family, greeted Robert in person at the entrance! Such a grand ceremony at the Shang family was unprecedented!

Shang Zhangming was a large man with an athletic build. Under his fringe were sharp eyes that looked as though they could see

through anyone. His black windbreaker matched an elusive and cold smile, his aquiline nose and slightly arched brows framed by freshly shaved cheeks. While he was not particularly handsome, he was definitely charismatic and made a deep impression in all who met him!

Robert left the ship and immediately approached Shang Zhangming with a smile. "To think that Lord Zhangming would personally be here to greet me, you are too kind!" While Zhangming looked younger than Robert, Robert still spoke with deference.

"Brother Robert, don't say that, it is an honor to welcome you here!" Shang Zhangming stepped forward as well, smiling as he spoke with a distinct metallic voice that was surprisingly pleasant.

Ye Chong looked from behind Robert at Shang Zhangming, but almost immediately, his attention shifted to a few bodyguards standing behind Shang Zhangming. Their posture and formation all showed high professionalism, and their eyes spoke of long experience in the field. Ye Chong would not underestimate them.

Robert and Shang Zhangming exchanged some quiet pleasantries before moving inside with interlocked arms.

The setup in the main hall was enough to surprise even Robert, as he was used to extravagance. At the center of the main hall was an extremely precious imperial jade sculpture of a Double Step Grass Dragon's skeleton, shining with a crystalline luster. Its eyes were sapphire gems, glowing with life under the illumination. Imperial jade was rare, and a large bulk like this one was one in a million. Molded by the unrivaled craftsmanship of this skeleton sculpture, the work looked almost alive, and was definitely a priceless treasure!

Draperies spun from Aroma beast's gold fur that almost reached the floor, emitting a faint and pleasant scent. Aroma beasts were endemic to Richie, fist-sized animals that were rarely found in the

wild, and one of Richie's protected species. Its fur was soft to the touch and in elegant gold, naturally emitting a strange fragrance.

These two things were very, very expensive. The subordinates who came with Robert were all astounded and mystified by the scene.

Shang Zhangming swept a seemingly innocent look across the people following behind Robert.

These people all responded differently as they entered the main hall.

Robert betrayed only a slight surprised before resuming his usual demeanor.

Bai Linan and Duan were quick as well, only showing their surprise for about 5 or 6 seconds. The remaining guards, however, were still wearing greedy looks.

What interested Shang Zhangming the most was the young man standing behind Bai Linan. The young man's expression had not changed ever since he entered the main hall, maintaining his cool exterior throughout, as if unaffected by his surroundings.

Who was this young man? That was what Shang Zhangming would like to find out.

Of course, Robert noticed the expressions of everyone else as well. He was satisfied with Bai Linan's and Duan's tight self control. However, when his eyes reached Ye Chong, they gleamed at Wang Xing's expression! He was still looking steady as usual. To have him as one of his own would be a most wonderful prospect! At that moment, Robert's desire to recruit Ye Chong was stronger than ever! However, on the surface, Robert betrayed nothing on his face.

Shang Zhangming and Robert chatted heartily as they moved into the inner rooms. Arrangements for Robert's security team were swiftly dealt with by Shang Zhangming's subordinates.

Robert's security team was ushered to a separate wing of the building. As Duan entered the wing, he immediately arranged for his subordinates to position themselves at strategic locations. Of course, Ye Chong was now unoccupied, and since his relationship with Bai Linan was exposed, no one treated him as a security guard anymore, but as an honored guest. Ye Chong even got his own room.

The room was fitted with various facilities, such as the helmet and photon processor required to access the virtual world. After Mu's inspection, the photon processor was found to be hyperlinked to the virtual world. The Shang family had installed some restrictive mechanisms, but that was easy enough for Mu to deal with.

Soon, Mu had laid down a series of feints and hidden traps. When Mu gave the green light, Ye Chong immediately hyperlinked to the virtual world. He and Mu had two main goals. Firstly, Wang Xing's fabricated background must be more extensive to avoid suspicion if he was ever investigated. Secondly, they must find Wang Weixing. While Lu Caite had said that Wang Weixing was most likely at Windstar Hospital, that was before Lu Caite entered the Orbits, which was a long time ago. Wang Weixing's current location should be further investigated. Besides, Lu Caite mentioned that his teacher was very famous, and should be easy to look up in the virtual world.

The fabrication task was left to Mu, as Ye Chong could not help with that. However, confirming whether Wang Weixing was still at Windstar Hospital was something that Ye Chong could handle.

Ye Chong entered the virtual world, and was welcomed by the ever present dazzling bright screen. For some reason, Ye Chong was reminded of his first time entering the virtual world, which was also his first time meeting the outside world! He thought of the content life he had training at the NR Training Center! If not for the stellar flare, he would probably continue his innocent way

of life!

All of a sudden, he felt a yearning towards his old life on the trash planet. What a carefree life!

Ye Chong shook his head, trying to refocus himself. He stepped forward, and remembered the way he entered the virtual world for the first time, like facing a powerful enemy. Ye Chong smiled at the memory. He could hide his feelings much better now.

If Bai Linan could see Ye Chong now, he would probably thought it was a ghost instead! Ye Chong could smile? Why would such an expression appear on Ye Chong's face? He would never believe it!

Now was not a good time for reminiscing. There were far more important things at hand. Ye Chong began to search for the community of Windstar Hospital. For such a big medical institution like Windstar Hospital, it must have its own community. If he could find it, he would be able to gather news of Wang Weixing. Of course, it would only work if Wang Weixing was as famous as Lu Caite claimed.

Soon, Ye Chong found the hospital's community. Windstar Hospital was a large medical institution comprised of medical treatment and research components. The community was large, its members mostly medical practitioners and patients. Most doctors were here for collaborations. Every day, there would be volunteer doctors to help the public. Of course, to seek proper diagnosis, patients would still have to visit the hospital.

Once he entered the main hall, he saw a self-service inquiry server system. Ye Chong approached the inquiry server and activated it.

"Good day, how may I assist you?" A holographic projection of a beautiful young lady in white medical uniform came out. She smiled kindly and spoke with a sweet voice.

"Is Mr Wang Weixing in the hospital?" Ye Chong asked.

"I'm sorry, Professor Wang Weixing has left to join this year's medical volunteer program last month. According to schedule, he should be returning in 83 days. If you want to, I can arrange for an appointment with another doctor!" The lady's words were like a bomb exploding in Ye Chong's head. This was very bad news to him.

"Please tell me Professor Wang Weixing's exact schedule!" Ye Chong asked, unwilling to back down.

"I'm sorry, since Professor Wang Weixing had attended the program in a private capacity, we do not know of the Professor's exact schedule!" This was another blow to Ye Chong.

"Ye, this does not look good!" In the virtual world, Mu materialized out of thin air.

"Yes, 83 days, it's not too long, we can go to planet Windstar first, and try with other doctors first. Besides, I think my episodes are getting less intense!" In truth, the odd condition was not a huge danger to Ye Chong. The episodes were getting less frequent, and the symptoms were less violent. However, Ye Chong dared not relax himself. Who knew what was really going on? If he actually died from this condition, it would be such a shame!

Ye Chong had high hopes for Wang Weixing, whom he had never met, hoping to cure his condition once and for all. However, it seemed that Wang Weixing was not in the hospital. It was truly disappointing for Ye Chong!

Mu left silently like the way he first appeared.

Ye Chong left the Windstar community in a bad mood. He cruised aimlessly in the virtual world. There was nothing for him in the real way at the moment, and the thought of mixing with those hypocritical people out there was unappealing to Ye Chong.

The virtual world was now more prosperous than ever. Ye Chong felt that the crowd was larger everywhere he went!

Everything was dazzling and sparkling. The market oozed a sense of modernity, and even those smaller shops lacking in grandeur had their own unique quaintness.

Suddenly, Ye Chong saw a flash of light and narrowed his eyes reflexively as his pupils contracted. He looked closely, and found that it was but a holographic broadcast suspended in the air.

Ye Chong laughed. Since when had he become so sensitive as he was before? He was about to take a step forward when something caught his attention.

Ye Chong stopped mid stride, lifted his head, and looked!

Chapter 175: A Light Bulb Moment

Two mechs were engaged in a tight battle. Red and green chased after each other like shadows, the sound of metal against metal occasionally heard as they came into contact. The spectators were all excited by the battle.

Ye Chong was shocked. He had spent some time in the virtual world, and was familiar with the close range combat level here. It was only a year or two since he last visited, but the mechs were now much better in close range combat! The two mechs he was seeing now were quite capable, much better than the so called aces he fought against in the NR Training Center. They were also not too far from his level!

Ye Chong did not know that during his time in the Orbits in the last year or two, close range combat between mechs had improved sharply in the virtual world! This was all initiated by him. He had once won against many aces under the name YC, and his many battle recordings went viral. From then on, people began to realize the potential of close range mechs, and the excitement that came with battle at close quarters, something that long range bullet exchanges could never match. Young people grew to love close range combat, since the virtual world was not all about winning or losing, but the exhilaration it could bring. That was how, in the virtual world, close range battles between mechs improved so much. However, in the real world, long range mechs were still the preferred choice.

Ye Chong noticed immediately with his keen eyes that the red mech was attacking in a way that was similar to bare handed fights.

Why had he never thought of that before? Ye Chong slowly grew convinced. Indeed, two mechs engaged in close range combat was similar in principle to two humans in a fight. What if he could apply combat skills in close range battles between mechs? It was

worth a shot! On the other hand, if he could apply combat skills to a battle between mechs, could he also apply some skills in mech battles to human combat?

Suddenly, it was like a large door opened wide before Ye Chong, and on the other side was a whole new world!

Ye Chong stood in a daze under the floating holographic broadcast. In the broadcast, the two mechs fought aggressively, throwing sparks as metal met metal. It was an intense battle, but Ye Chong was frowning in thought, in his own world.

Spacing off in the virtual world? Passersby's gave Ye Chong a few odd looks.

After half an hour, Ye Chong finally took a long exhale. His mind back in the virtual world, Ye Chong rushed to the nearest NR Training Center he could find.

Ye Chong had always wondered if all NR Training Centers look the same. Up till now, his experience told him it was affirmative. This made it easy for him.

Ye Chong entered the NR Training Center with his old name - YC. With Mu's protection, Ye Chong believed that no one would know who he really was.

The NR Training Center was crowded as usual. Ye Chong's last mech, Dark Shadow was already obliterated by Invincible Firepower. Now, he had no mechs under his name, and would have to buy a new one. Fortunately, his points were enough to buy a few advanced level mechs.

Ye Chong followed the familiar route to the maintenance hub. While every NR Training Center was similar in terms of their structure, the mechs available were different. The advanced level mechs here could no longer excite Ye Chong, but for now, he needed a humanoid mech for training.

Ye Chong found a blue-black humanoid mech. It was about 10

meters tall, its dark blue body not as bulky as mechs usually were, and its well proportioned build was something Ye Chong appreciated. Its four limbs were black, its surface covered with a matte polish that made it look cold and sturdy. More importantly, its surface would not be reflective. The mech had a cool looking profile, the hard lines matching the blue and black, making it almost as cold as Ye Chong himself! Its forehead had a bright red diamond, burning angrily against the blue and black, a bewitching touch to the mech!

This mech with the name Tissot immediately caught Ye Chong's attention.

Tissot had no supporting fins, its arm devoid of any shields, and it was poorly armed. The two handles by the waist must be the handles of two laser swords. There were also the two parrying spears fitted closely to the arms! These two weapons were the only ones it had.

This was a model that was launched two years ago, but the points required to redeem it was a bit surprising to Ye Chong, as it was worth three times more than his old Dark Shadow.

Once he entered the mech, Ye Chong could understand what made this mech special!

Maneuvering was a smooth affair, and the mech's engines were impressive, capable of powerful short bursts. The mech also had incredibly tough armor, almost like a lesser copy of Black Cove's war mech! However, its choice of weapons were even more extreme than Black Cove's - two laser swords and two parrying spears were too little for a mech! Without any long range weapons, Tissot's range would be severely limited.

Was being extreme a popular trend nowadays? Ye Chong thought of Duan's mech, similar in concept to Tissot, only that one of them was suited for close range battles, and the other for long range ones!

Ye Chong tried a few maneuvers and loved the feel of it! The mech's practicality may be suspect, but it was perfect as a training mech for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong did not intend to use any weapons, since he wanted to try out the idea he had in that light bulb moment. He was best in short range combat, and having no hindering equipment actually worked well for him.

The idea of applying combat skills in mech battles was not original, and there were already many existing techniques. Many combat enthusiasts fell in love with mech battles, since they were often more skilled than lesser mech pilots. In the last two years, many new names rose to fame due to their close range combat skills, and they were known as combat mech pilots. These combat mech pilots had their own fan base, and some even opened their own dojo in the virtual world to teach not combat skills, but mech combat skills.

Of course, becoming a combat mech pilot was not easy. Battles between mechs was still different than between humans. Besides battle moves, there was still the overly clunky mech maneuvering to consider. It was rare for one to conquer both. While combat experts were skilled in their field, mech piloting was still best learned from a young age. As for mech pilots, while many of them have superb mech piloting skills, few had ever formally learned the dying skill of actual combat.

Hence, the so called combat mech pilots today were not up to par. However, it was undeniable that mech battles were heading towards uncharted waters, and the fading world of combat was beginning to gain some life.

Ye Chong found a basic training room. The room still looked the same as before, and visitors were scarce as usual.

Ye Chong found an empty spot, but did not began training immediately. He was trying to analyse the differences between

mech combat and normal combat.

Normal combat was driven by muscle power, while mech combat was driven by engines. This was the fundamental difference. With the help of engines, mechs can stay in midair longer, something that the human body could not allow. The body's soft elasticity was also something mechs could not achieve.

Ye Chong tried some simple combat moves. Initially, he could not get the hang of it, but very soon he began to understand the tricks behind it. This was because of his superb mech maneuvering skills. It was because of his skillful maneuvering that he could perform the moves that his mind conjured.

Of course, he was far from achieving the ideal results. Even if he could perform the moves, it did not mean that the moves were practical. He still needed to improve, step by step, to make the moves more reasonable and suitable for mechs.

In the end, however, Ye Chong had finally taken his first step forward. This was the first time he created something by himself without Mu's instructions. Mu seemed to understand him, and did not appear to intrude.

As for his second idea of applying mech battle skills into actual combat, it would have to wait until he was done with his first idea.

Ye Chong trained in full concentration, repeatedly practicing some basic moves patiently. Mu had said that the basics were the most important, and Ye Chong kept his words at heart. Gradually, Ye Chong could move more smoothly, and Tissot's attacks grew faster. Soon, Ye Chong reached the limits of what Tissot's mechanical parts could allow.

Tissot seemed like a mech specially designed for mech combat. Ye Chong maneuvered smoothly, and found that the mech's joints had engines designed to strengthen its attacks. He also noticed many of Tissot's less obvious design features.

Tissot's external equipments were only a front; its true weapon was its body. All potential attacking parts of the mech were specially designed. For example, Tissot's two palms had edges that cut like knives, and its knuckles were just as sharp. When its elbow was bent, it became a sharp awl that could punch a dent into its enemy. The knees had auxiliary engine that were thrice as powerful as for normal mechs.

Ye Chong finally understood why the mech was so extreme in its design - it was a mech made for close range combat.

Time flew past unnoticed as Ye Chong trained, and he found himself growing proficient with those basic moves.

Mu suddenly materialized like a ghost and said, "Ye, there might be a place just for you!"

"Where?" Ye Chong knew that Mu would never speak carelessly.

"Here?" Ye Chong asked curiously. The room was pitch black.

"Yes, here. This is a room used for reaction practice, but it's perfect for your training! There will be many glowing spheres shot towards you, and you'll have to either hit or avoid those spheres. This is a pointless training for you, so what you have to do now is to not avoid the spheres, and try to keep attacking the spheres for as long as possible. Are you ready?" Mu asked.

Ye Chong drew in a deep breathe. "Alright! Let's get started!"

As he finished speaking, numerous glowing spheres appeared on a holographic screen, shooting towards him. Tissot moved into a horse stance as a calm combat expert would.

At the beginning, Ye Chong felt it was still manageable, and even had time to appreciate the sparkles that came from the destroyed glowing spheres that he hit.

As the spheres grew in numbers and came in faster, Ye Chong began to feel pressured, and no longer as relaxed. His precise attacks were now desperate, clumsy movements.

Tissot's arms, legs, knees, elbows and shoulders were all utilized, but Ye Chong was finally hit by a glowing sphere after enduring for about one minute.

Giving up halfway was not Ye Chong's style, and he could also feel the benefits of this training.

As he tried again and again, Ye Chong began to enjoy the process and gained new insights. He could hold against the spheres longer and longer, and slowly began to realize the subtleties involved. He found that as his attacks became more concise, the effectiveness increases. Controlled breathing was important, and any slight hiccups in that would almost certainly lead to the end of another practice round.

Ye Chong found a mysterious phenomenon - whenever his speed reached a threshold, Ye Chong could feel himself entering a strange state, as if his body could move by itself without conscious thoughts, while his mind became an observer at the side, incapable of any clear thoughts.

In this state, his movements were curiously sharp, but it was not often for him to reach this state. Ye Chong trained for more than 30 rounds, and only reached this state twice. Each time, it lasted for only a few seconds, after which Ye Chong would wake up, as if from a dream, and would inevitably be hit by a glowing sphere.

Was it a hallucination? Ye Chong did not mind it so much.

"Hmm, Ye, it's about time for you to leave!" Mu saw that Ye Chong was deeply absorbed in his training, and reminded him.

"Okay, one last time!" Ye Chong replied after a moment's thought.

Chapter 176: Banquet

In the pilot's cabin, looking at the holographic screen before him, his hands resting easily on the controls, Ye Chong breathed in deep and closed his eyes, his chest expanding and contracting vigorously like a wind box. After a few seconds, Ye Chong's chest movements began to lessen, and his breathing slowed. He ran through the last thirty or so rounds of training in his head repeatedly, analyzing his mistakes.

Ye Chong abruptly opened his eyes and yelled, "Begin!"

Tissot stood silently like a black warrior, moving only when the first glowing sphere was almost touching it, its right arm hitting the sphere dead center. The glowing sphere immediately fragmented into a thousand pieces, fading into the darkness. At the same time, the mech angled to the right, its left elbow hitting another glowing sphere with uncanny accuracy, and the sphere fragmented and vanished like before.

Its movements grew faster and faster, every joint deftly utilized as a weapon to attack the spheres!

If anyone were witnessing this, they would be mesmerized by the beautiful sight. Around Tissot was a circle of light, and one could roughly make out Tissot's figure in the center. Numerous glowing spheres flew towards the glowing circle around Tissot like moth to fire, and immediately scattered silently into sparkling fragments, fluttering into nonexistence from the circle of light. The scene was beautiful as a dream.

Ye Chong still could not endure past the five-minute mark. After three minutes, the difficulty level increased drastically. If he could avoid the glowing spheres instead of hitting them all, Ye Chong believed that he could endure for at least 10 minutes.

Returning back to the real world, Ye Chong finally felt the lethargy hit him. More accurately, it was mental lethargy due to

long periods of high concentration. After leaving the virtual world, Ye Chong felt a little dizzy, and breathed deeply for a few times before recovering himself.

Soon, someone came to invite Ye Chong for dinner.

Robert and Shang Zhangming discussed for a few hours in the inner halls. No one knew what they were discussing, only that they were both looking pleasant after the meeting, marking a smooth discussion.

The dinner crowd was large. Or rather, that was what Ye Chong thought, attending a banquet like this for the first time.

On Robert's side were Robert himself, Bai Linan, Duan and Ye Chong. Behind him were his four bodyguards, and Ye Chong could now finally see the faces of these four mysterious bodyguards.

They were all very pale, wearing cold expressions, much like Ye Chong himself. They look better in suits, compared to Ye Chong. They stood unmoving with their hands on the sides behind Robert.

Ye Chong felt a tic in the corner of his eyes.

By the ear of the nearest bodyguard to him, Ye Chong noticed an inconspicuous impression of a line. This impression extended all the way from the ear to the collar, marking the boundary between two very different skin colors. The side towards the nape was in normal skin color, unlike the unnatural paleness of the face due to prolonged lack of stellar radiation.

Ye Chong noticed similar impressions on the other three bodyguards, and he was inwardly shocked! He immediately thought of the masks! Only putting on masks for long periods would cause such a disparity in skin colour! Their Double Curved Steps already made him suspicious of them being from Black Cove, and now, he was almost sure of it! Only Black Cove people would wear masks, and since he had seen those masks before, he knew that the mask matched the impressions on the skin perfectly!

Wearing the masks for a long time would naturally lead to this kind of pallor.

If these four men were from Black Cove, then how was Robert connected to Black Cove? If Black Cove would send four soldiers to him as bodyguards, he must be very important to them!

It looked like Robert was more than he seemed to be!

Ye Chong tried desperately to maintain his normal expression, and luckily, no one was noticing him at the moment. After taking in the shocking fact, Ye Chong quickly calmed down. Why did they not make any moves against him? Black Cove was out for him, and would not give up easily as was their usual style.

Could the opponents be faking their ignorance, and secretly sending for backup?

Shang Zhangming had many of his own people attending the banquet. Besides Shang Zhangming himself and Zhang Xin, there were also other important members of the Shang family. Shang Zhangming was a little surprised to find Ye Chong at the dinner table, but he swiftly accepted the fact and became at ease.

The banquet began with a joyful atmosphere. Ye Chong, occupied with his problems, could barely taste what he was eating.

"Mu, I think we're gonna have to leave soon!" Ye Chong spoke to Mu in his mind.

"Yes, but we must pick a more suitable time, or it will attract unwanted attention! This advice is from Shang, but I agree!" Mu and Shang communicated in a way that Ye Chong could not understand, but Mu would always relay Shang's thoughts whenever he was in unfamiliar territory. This was not a courtesy that Shang would ever extend!

Shang's words were reasonable, and Ye Chong understood that if he moved too hastily, it would only attract unwanted attention. What he needed now was to be left alone!

After experiencing so much, Ye Chong had grown more mature! If it was his earlier self, Ye Chong would immediately deploy his mech and escape!

Since it was decided that they would find a suitable time to make their move, Ye Chong could finally notice the delicious food in his mouth. Since he did not want attention, he continued to eat without looking up. He had never attended such an event, and did not know that his actions were out of the ordinary. Everyone else was only delicately sampling their dishes, but only he was eating by the mouthful! In a banquet like this, everyone would try to demonstrate their refinement. The meal was only an ends to a mean, as everyone actually hoping to bond with each other in the setting.

The rest of the table looked at Ye Chong strangely, most of them being members of the Shang family, looking at Ye Chong with aloofness and contempt.

Mu relayed Shang's words dutifully to Ye Chong, "Ye, you idiot, you're destroying your reputation. Heavens, how did I got to know someone like you?" Mu imitated Shang's tone to a T. Of course, he did not forget to add, "Ye, that was Shang. You know, I'm not familiar with this! Shang may be more reliable in this matter!"

"Did I do anything wrong?" Ye Chong was baffled.

"Ye, I think Shang should be the one to handle this!" Mu was just like that, always choosing the best solution to the problem.

"Haha, I thought I'd still need to wait a few days to come out, but now here I am! It's only for three hours, but it's so much better than being stuffed in there! All thanks to our most adorable Ye!" Shang laughed like a maniac.

Ye Chong groaned inside. The fellow was obviously bored to death inside! He could only hope that the mech would not suggest any crazy ideas!

"Okay, Ye, now do as I say!" Shang spoke complacently, like a child who found himself an interesting toy.

Shang's tone immediately triggered a sense of foreboding in Ye Chong, but he had no choice but to acquiesce. "Alright!, But, Shang, don't push it!"

"Sure, I would never!" Shang's tone gave Ye Chong a very good idea of what the mech thought of his warning.

"Alright, let's begin!" Shang spoke excitedly.

"Ye, you've managed to make yourself the center of everyone's attention, even if in an absolutely gross way. But don't worry, hehe, this problem is a piece of cake for me! However, to avoid your repeating the same mistake, allow me to explain!" Shang was obviously very confident of himself.

"Oh, what did I do?" Ye Chong was also curious about what went wrong.

Noting Ye Chong's interest, Shang was even more encouraged. "Ye, socializing is a very difficult skill, looks like you'll have to be formally coached in social etiquette. Take this banquet, for example. For aristocrats, it's not an occasion to fill their stomachs. They will usually eat a little something before attending the banquet, since they can then focus on socializing with other people, instead of eating! Don't underestimate the power of dining etiquette; it's the most important way for the upper class to socialize, and a very effective strategy to bring people together."

"I see!" Ye Chong said unsurely.

"You've made five mistakes just now. One, you should eat the dessert laid before you first, and not the main dish in your plate. Two, you're using your cutleries wrong. Three, usually, you should take a sip of the wine on your left after a few bites of food. Four, ignoring other people while you eat is very rude. Five, the way you eat is criminally offensive."

"Heavens, do you still call that dining?" Ye Chong was vexed, and groaned inside.

"Ye, this is a very elegant field of knowledge!" Shang spoke eagerly.

"Hmph, I don't see what's so elegant about it!" Ye Chong could not agree. To him, all these difficult rules only served to complicate what was originally a very simple affair of eating. Besides, it was very inefficient.

"Sigh, I know you can't understand everything right now, just do as I say!" Shang gave up on convincing Ye Chong for the moment.

"Hmm, alright!" Ye Chong had no qualms with that. After all, he understood his current situation. Since he was not powerful enough to break the rule, he could only protect himself by following them.

"Ye, see that third cutlery from the left?"

"This one?" Ye Chong picked up a table knife with a serrated edge and a hook on the other side.

"Yes! This one. Now hold another table knife in your left hand, the one with the metallic handle! Hehe, using two table knives is a very ancient way of dining for aristocrats. Since it's difficult, not many people eat like this anymore, but it'll make you look like an aristocrat yourself, surely someone will recognize this posture. All we have to do is to convince them of this! Hehe ..." Shang gave an evil laugh.

"Move your hands slowly, always cut your food into thumb sized pieces. Keep your elbows slightly open to the side. Control your expression, make sure you look calm. Sigh, I suppose that last thing is your forte!"

Ye Chong did exactly as told. His accurate control of his strength allowed for easy handling of the knives.

Most of the people at the table were chatting enthusiastically,

and did not notice Ye Chong's change in demeanor. However, a few of the Shang family's older members exchanged looks of surprise, obviously noticing Ye Chong's "uniqueness". However, most of them still looked at Ye Chong with condescension.

"Ye, you can resume your normal way of eating now!" Shang laughed like a knave.

"Why is that?" Ye Chong felt lost.

Shang explained carefully, "Don't worry, these people here are all very cunning. They'll definitely notice your short demonstration. If they recognize this ancient and difficult way of eating, they'll definitely change their minds about you! Ye, remember, never let your opponent guess your next move! Sudden actions like this will make them think that you're unpredictable, and not some ignorant peasant. They might think that you did it unintentionally, and even believe that you're actually the descendant of some long forgotten ancient aristocratic family! Haha, of course, they'd never guess what you're hiding. However, that's all none of your business! Isn't that right?"

"Yes!" These were definitely not complications that he needed to know.

Food was excellent, the best that Ye Chong had ever had. Since Shang assured him it was alright, Ye Chong ate to his heart's content. This attracted curious glances from everyone on the table, and the few older members of the Shang family exchanged some meaningful looks. Something unintelligible flashed past Robert's eyes, but he quickly resumed his conversation with Shang Zhangming.

Dinner ended, and Ye Chong did not do anything strange again. Shang managed to keep silent throughout the affair, which surprised him! Just when Ye Chong thought it was all over, Shang finally broke his silence, announcing excitedly, "Ye, it's finally time for the main event!"

Chapter 177: Ye Chong's First Soirée

"The what?" Ye Chong did not seem to compute it, "The main event?" In his perspective, when a meal had ended, it meant everything had ended, a finale where people should leave, the place should be cleaned.

"Yes, the main event, habitually there would be Soirée after dinner - a social event exclusively for the gentries of course. Technically members of the upper social class would take the opportunity to interact with each other. But well, in comparison to a table dining course, Soirée is freer in the methodologies, also much more colorful. You would not be sealed on the dining table and restricted by table mannerism." And Ye Chong thought he had mastered the worst kind of jargons in his mech studies. Apparently, "Soirée" was a suave, fancy term to call a private social function held between the men and women in wealth.

"At this place...", continued Shang, signaling Ye Chong to take a look, "they usually would exchange certain information of their backgrounds. Most of them would not converse with each other about serious businesses on this occasion. Precisely saying, this is known as a kind of recreation, solely for enjoyment. To some youngsters however, such function appeared to be an important stage to spotlight their appeal. And... this is also the social circle for the Madame, you know, the ladies, the dowager. Sigh, I don't think you understand a word I've said! But just watch and learn, you'll know soon enough!" sounded like an expert from the Great Britain, Shang gave a lengthy lecture about life.

"Whatever..." Ye Chong responded uninterestedly, as he clearly knew such lifestyle was not what he desired. Thus his current objective would be listening to Shang's advice so that he could stay low in this party, especially when he knew nothing about the lethargic mannerism of this alien society. It would not be good if he made a joke out of himself, though he was pretty curious the

fact that Shang actually had interests in these meretricious things.

The dining tables were soon removed by the butlers. A few coffee tables with sliced fruits, wines and sweets were placed instead. The center of the hall was emptied and couches rested at the corners. The servants hurried their works like a fast-forwarded renovation. The premium hologram music player formed the classy atmosphere with the quality music the whole time.

The relaxing music wafted through the hall, as everyone entered the hall one after another.

"Ye, don't just stand there! Go grab yourself a glass of wine. Hold it in your hand, even if you don't feel like drinking," reminded Shang.

And Ye Chong reached one of the glasses of red wine on the table nearby. "Now...," added Shang, "you shall walk slowly around the hall. Gently lift your glass whenever you bump into people. If they lifted their glasses before you, you lift your glasses too to signal your friendliness. The whole point is to act naturally and good-natured."

"B-o-r-i-n-g!" Muttered Ye Chong in his head, "You mean we are doing this for the whole night?"

"Heh!" Laughed Shang, "Ye, you call this 'boring'? Don't be such a hasty man, the more boring part comes after this." His laugh sounded more like a steady snicker.

A small crowd flooded into the hall after that, with each man having a lady by his side. Shang Zhangming was obviously occupied at the moment, as he walked around to send his loving greetings to acquaintances with glass in his hand.

Mr. Robert walked to Ye Chong, also with a glass in his hand, "Wang my brother, what's up with that Pokerface? There will be beauties coming to us after this! You can't be spending your youth without some spices of lovemaking! Too bad the beauties missed

the chance to witness your strength or you would be drowned by their cuddles and smooches. Hahaha!" he chuckled as he lifted his glass.

"It's nothing, really," flatly he replied, as Ye Chong was never reactive towards such kind of comments, he just mimicked Mr. Robert's gesture as he briefly lifted his glass.

"Good," complimented Shang in his head. "That action you took was great!"

"Really?" Seeing through the expression of Ye Chong, he laughed his way out.

The hall was getting more crowded over the night. To make this function much fulfilling, Shang Zhangming actually invited almost every public figure on Rique planet.

Ye Chong walked around aimlessly with that glass of wine wrinkling his fingers. Hardly there was anybody lifting their glasses for him. Pleasing it was to our hero, although he kept sensing strange stares coming from the females around him... "Ugh." It was discomfoting. He wanted to know why but he failed to, as suddenly the flock of females would evacuate themselves the moment he turned his head over them. "Ugh!" Ye Chong was not delighted.

I give up. Stares won't kill me anyway!

"Isn't this lonely man Mr. Wang?" The sweet voice rang from his back. Ye Chong turned to his back and he saw Shang Xin, holding her glass of wine, walked towards him fashionably with a man in white suit. One of the young man's eyes were veiled by that silvery white hair of his, which gave off a kind of obscurity to his expression. The corners of his lips were hazily raised and lowered, on that fair smooth face of his. He was truly handsome. And that was when Ye Chong felt the sights he collected were suddenly all shifted to that man in split seconds.

It was relieving to Hermit Ye Chong.

The young man bowed, expressing courtesy towards Ye Chong, in grace and humbleness.

"Ugh! Ye! This kiddo is more striking than you! Dammit!" Shang sounded bad-tempered.

"Striking? What you mean?" It was the first time he heard of such adjective.

"Yes, a man is called 'striking' when he's good-looking," Shang gave a concise explanation.

"Good-looking? The heck I could do with being 'good-looking'? Not like I could get a meal with it. If this is also an advantage, it is an empty advantage!" indifferently he replied.

Ye Chong returned a bow at the young man, "Yes, Ms. Shang, what do you want from me?" and he spoke to Shang Xin.

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Both of their expressions turned stale right before Ye Chong.

"Wrong! Wrooong!" Shang sounded absolutely annoyed, "Ye, don't you use that Mu style here! It's only a recreational activity! You know? Leisure? Relax? I can't believe there would be someone asking what the counterpart wanted him to do upon the first greeting on a Soirée! Oh my Rique! Save me! This is too much!"

"What in Rique do I say then?" asked Ye Chong.

"Say anything! Like a simple 'hello, Ms. Shang. Nice weather tonight isn't it?' Or an expressive 'Ms. Shang you look gorgeous tonight.' There's nothing you can't say, except for something like that Mu's signature 'what do you want from me?'"

"Nonsense. Aren't those gibberish?" muttered Ye Chong.

"This is a place for people to spit gibberish!" accurately Shang

concluded.

Even for an adaptive lady like Shang Xin was shut down for a moment by that striking line she heard for the first time of her life on a Soirée from Ye Chong. She was muted. The atmosphere got awkward. Ye Chong feared delivering a critical blow without notice again, so he shut up completely. The silence lasted till that young man came to break the stunning spell, "I heard from Sister Xi that you were actually able to snipe an enemy 60 meters away with a dagger. This is seriously amazing to me!" A charming smile he lobbed as he spoke.

"Oh! This is Shang Ling!" Shang Xi introduced hastily, "He had heard of your stories and became really determined of seeing you to express his admiration."

"Oh, thank you. But that was mere luck," another flat response from Ye Chong. Frankly speaking, that blow was indeed with a little factor of luck. He was not confident to say that he would be able to produce the same satisfying result as before.

Hmm?

Shang Ling drew a lifting curve on his face, "You can't gamble if you don't have the strength to begin with! Mr. Wang, stop being so humble! You deserve it!" Somehow there was some underlying meaning heard from his words.

"Mr. Shang you don't have to butter me up..." Ye Chong's expression remained as indifferent.

Shrugged the young man gracefully, "It'll be an enjoyable experience if I was ever able to have a competition with Mr. Wang! I'm sure!" A brief second later, somehow he sensed his misconduct, he ceased the conversation, "Joking! Joking! I was just joking! How could I ever be even your opponent? Mr. Wang. Although I wonder if Mr. Wang has an interest in piloting mechs..."

"Just normal," alarmed Ye Chong inside as he simply worded his

response.

"I seriously would love to witness Mr. Wang's technique in piloting the mechs." The eyes of Shang Ling was of expectation, strong expectation.

"I see," Ye Chong gave a random response. Why the heck did he suddenly mention about mech-piloting? Does he know something? Does his offer mean something else? Ye Chong decided to not send off responses on a whim, considering how he barely knew the capability of the man.

As conveyed Ye Chong's interest on the conversation, both Shang Ling and Shang Xin excused themselves. They waltzed to the other guests instead.

Ye Chong decided to stay at one corner and sipped the wine in his glass. He refused to head back to the center of the hall in spite of Shang's nag.

"Ling, how do you find the guy?" asked Shang Xin as she walked by Shang Ling's side.

"It's a strange yet interesting guy. Very cold too.," he seemed intrigued.

"Right. He's really strange and seemed to be completely unaware of the mannerism of society. Although my uncle did mention about that to me, he saw Wang Xing using some weird double knife ceremony during the course randomly. It was very briefly done however. My uncle was suspecting if Wang Xing is actually a nobleman of some kind," added Shang Xi. "I seriously do not buy his suspect nevertheless, he doesn't look like a nobleman at all. But assuming if he did receive education of nobility before, what's up with all these camouflages he'd been putting up then?" Shang Xin's expression was filled with perplexity.

"D-Double Knife Ceremony?" shocked Shang Ling.

"Ling, you know this double knife trick too?" asked Shang Xi in

curiosity.

"Yes. The Double Knife Ceremony is a primeval table mannerism which only was handed down among the nobility of the upperclass, yes, the nobility of the nobilities. Different from the modern table mannerism we do today, they wield two knives at once. It is very challenging to dine like this because you could not wield them by your will and you could easily hurt your mouth without being properly trained on this, which was also why we eventually use fork and knife instead. One who is able to perform the Double Knife Ceremony is very likely to be the descendant of the nobility, especially when it is also an extremely rare sight to see one who wields such way in the aristocrat or families of the wealth today," explained Shang Ling in detail.

"Judging by what you've mentioned, he should have received very superior education. Then why was he acting such gracelessly? Is it an act? What's the purpose then?" Shang Xin began pondering.

"Well, seems like we had gotten into a very interesting person." The excitement grew on Shang Ling's face, as peculiar glows flashed in his eyes.

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Ye Chong sipped the wine in his hand mechanically in repetition. The alcohol by volume of this red wine was exceptionally low. It tasted slightly sweet, like some sort of fruit juice. It was the first time he tasted red wine, so it left him a good impression on the taste. Nonetheless, the imagery of Lunatic Guan being drunk and claiming that she was all conscious and sound came haunting him, reminding him to never turn into that uncontrollable sight.

Ye Chong at the corner alone was not feeling lonely at all, as he chatted with Shang on and off.

The music had changed into a dance before he noticed it. Out of the blue, people gathered at the empty ground in the middle. And

they tended to enter in pairs - one man and one woman - fluttering into the crowd as they grooved along the tune.

Ye Chong seemed a little interested at first, but it did not take long before he started yawning at the slow and hypnotizing music to his ears.

Of course, Shang had to take a part of the credits to that. He did not stop the paradigm transformation inside Ye Chong's head since the beginning. Anyone could inevitably be murdered by the information overload, the jargon bombardments by an artificial indulgence.

"Ye, you must learn how to get the indulgence of your life!" stated the A.I. "The world is still relatively at peace and harmony! It's not all about killing-and-surviving!" Halted Shang abruptly as he realized his ongoing lecture did not seem to match Ye Chong's experience, so he discarded his peace ideology and went on with something else, "I mean, combats undeniably shared an importance of you. But having life is equally important! If there was no fun in life, you are no different from a killing machine! Ye, I knew the enjoyment of life well enough despite being an artificial intelligence, what about you..."

Why Shang stopped?

Ye Chong knew the answer well, if there was nothing unexpected happening, he would not stop his thesis anytime soon.

"Would you like a dance with me?" A voice of a girl came shyly into his ears.

Ye Chong lifted his head. It was a girl in a faint beige one-piece. Her long hair stranded over her shoulders as her head lowered in some degree of shyness. Her hands crossed in front of her body and through his sharp eyes Ye Chong could discern her hands twiddling the dress of hers.

"Are you talking to me?" said Ye Chong as he took a look around.

"Mhm," reddened the face of the girl, tomato-red it was, "C-Could you dance with me?" muttered her.

"Holy Matrimony! Such a beauty! So naive, yet so charming! Ye, say yes. Go! Go! Go! Say the Y-word! You insensitive boy! How could you be so fortunate! You always get the nice girls! Holy Molly! This is too unreasonable! Boy you are sure lucky! Hahahahaha! You actually bumped into a beauty within the first 3 hours here!" Shang's excitement roared within his head.

I knew it... Sobbed Ye Chong. Shang always managed to lose control of himself whenever he saw a female, especially if the female turned out to be the so-called beauty by his standards. He would go malfunctioned, short-circuit. Well at least that was what Ye Chong saw.

"Why must I dance with her?" asked Ye Chong in a laid-back tone. Listening to Shang's lecture was a torture, but then, crashing down Shang's lecture would be a joy instead.

"Ye, you inhuman ignorant bull! You beast! There's a pure-looking lady came inviting you for a dance after mustering her whole night of courage and you ask me why you must? I-Is this even a question coming from a man?" scolded Shang madly.

The girl lifted her head too as she saw no response from the man before her.

That was when Ye Chong had a better look on her face. The skin was fair as the snow, fragile yet tickling, the face of hers depicted some naivety of her character, the tiny nose of hers, the pouted lips of hers, that one-piece with laces at the edge of hers, an exact setting of a princess in fairytales... Gorgeous.

The big expressive eyes of hers stared at Ye Chong carefully. The eyes of avoidant somehow expressed bit of expectation, which reminded Ye Chong of Nan Nan he had not seen in the past few months for some reason.

He remembered how Nan Nan also came approaching him with a fearful eyes, being all cautious and frightened. Her eyes and her expression, they looked very identical! Ye Chong's mind wandered off...

"Ye! What in the Rique you are waiting for! Say yes! Hurry up!" rushed Shang in his head. The tone sounded as if he was going to do the dance for Ye Chong instead.

"But Shang, you obviously know I don't know how to dance!" Ye Chong disapproved it.

"Heh!" Shang actually pinpointed the shaking will in between the lines, "No problem, Ye, I have a plan!" He carried on convincing the robotic boy to do a dance.

"You sure?" Ye Chong was skeptical about it.

"Heh! Sure! No worries!" guaranteed Shang, even though the laugh he made afterwards felt sort of proud.

Chapter 178: Sway, Swirl and Sensation

Bai Linan was wandering in the hall. He would greet with a nod at anybody coming to him, be the person an acquaintance or a total stranger. He would even have a brief conversation with them. He would say he did not waste the time he spent with his boss, as he got very familiar with such lifestyle and understood deep down inside the meaning behind each gesture at a ballroom.

His sight drifted through the crowd as he was identifying the potential guest worthy for interaction. If he lacked such skill, the efficiency of his effort would be halved. He had been taking all sorts of jobs way before his ballroom career. Being extra cautious had always been his personality, or chances were he might never be able to stand out among the pirates that well and survive till now.

The music rolled on as people scurried to find a partner to dance with so that they could join the dancing crew at the center.

The guests flashed quickly before Bai Linan, which made him wondered if he should get into dancing as well.

Let's see...

?

!

Bai Linan zoned out suddenly. His willow expression went hollow. It was somehow strange as he stared on for the next few seconds. He then rubbed his eyes in strong disbelief. Am I seeing things?

Oh my Robert Sir... What had happened? T-This is too creepy... What sorcery is this?

Bai Linan could conclude that he had never been into such witchcraft before in his entire life, for he actually witnessed Ye Chong leading a lady into a dance! Honestly, it would be less

shocking for him to witness a mutated gorilla grabbing a lady and having a Samba at the center with spotlight on. Dancing was nothing amazing, especially when he was an expert himself. Dancing with a woman was absolutely child's play, of course he would not do a dance with a man to impress anyone as much as Ye Chong did. These premises were so normal, till they were applied on Ye Chong. Creepy! Creepy indeed! The creepiness was unable to be worded!

Did a big bang just occur? Or was there a super nova he was unaware of?

Ye Chong had his hand holding the tender, smooth hand of this unknown lady, which he would have to put a majority of his attention on, since he feared the God-given hand (as stated by Shang) snapping and shattering into a paste of screamer if he would apply slight strength on the grip. Furthermore he was not used to holding people's hands, there were literally a few instances where he nearly tossed the girl he was holding like a sandbag subconsciously. Fortunately, miraculously he was quick in reaction, as he ceased his muscle movement swiftly... or the music might stop, people might shriek and the center might get evacuated.

"Ye, c'mon, relax a little. Just listen to my instruction. Heh! First, your body must be flexible, not brittle!" Shang's tone grew prouder somehow.

"Shang, I just hope that your 'instruction' would not get any messier! And please don't ask me to do some weird screwed up stuffs!" The last line of Ye Chong came out quite like a warning.

"Heh! No worries," the devilish sneer gave Ye Chong a shudder. But well, since Ye Chong had already made his first step onto the dance floor, guess he could only make his following steps.

The sole relief to Ye Chong's situation was this scaredy cat lady acting more nervous than he himself. Ye Chong could even hear

her throbbing heart and feel the quivering hand in his grip. For Ye Chong himself, he did not see the point of being nervous at this, since he did not care whatever that could happen on the dance floor. If anything would go wrong, he believed no one could stop him once he hopped into the Guardian. The one, single fear was... probably Shang, who liked to play with fire and he played with it too much! But it seemed more like his usual style... and unavoidable.

Ye Chong was not the foolish kind. He fully observed that one pair of guest already dancing at the center in one glance. The posture of the gent and the placement of his hand over his partner's body, he mimicked them all, flawlessly.

"Keep your top still, look after the direction of your feet, yes, do it slow. Left feet, radius vector : 6 degree, 40 centimeters away!" Hurrahed the devil.

Ye Chong accurately landed his step at the location stated by Shang.

"Now, right leg of yours, radius vector: 42 degree, 40 centimeters away too!"

Ye Chong again, accurately trod according to the coordinate.

"Great. Now, also your right leg, radius vector: 72 degree, 50 centimeters away this time!"

Ye Chong did as he was exactly told.

...

"Relax, muscle relax. Your action must not be awkward. Be with the music. When you shift your direction, you exert a little force to your female counterpart. How was it? Not hard as you've assumed, isn't it?" The devil sounded more thrilled than before.

The sweat of his back had already wetted every single corner of the shirt, since he was literally performing every instruction given by Shang via the control over his muscle. It was torturing! He had

invested all his focus on controlling his body, he did not have the grace to take a look at the stare coming from the lady.

"Doronath Step this is called. It's a dance step of middle difficulty, which fits perfectly to the music right now. Isn't it interesting?"

Ye Chong after regaining his inertia could not help but to spit, "Doronath step? You call this a step? This is terrible and lack practical purposes! It's nothing compared to the T-step, the Curved Step and the Cross Step! This is silly!" Those steps Ye Chong mentioned were steps frequently used in combats.

The devil's eyes rolled like a slot machine. He almost passed out from Ye Chong's comment. The vein bloated on his head after stabilizing his fall, "Y-You combat maniac!"

Meanwhile Shang Ling who had been all gentle and kind, greeting the guest around, froze his smile entirely the moment he turned.

"Sister, have you heard of things like your young sister Lan dancing with an actual man?" His whisper trailed off. "Yes what?" she nodded her head, Shang Xin did not turn to check it out, "No way." A conclusion of absolution from her, "How could that ever happen? I was the one who taught her dancing. Other than being under me and my sister's lead, no way she would know how to dance with others," her judgement sounded highly confident. She was utterly sure.

"I think I'm seeing things," mumbled Shang Ling.

"Yikes! Things you've been thinking of. My sister would touch nothing else other than the corner of the room." She turned her head to Shang Ling, who was staring at one specific direction in blank dismay.

"What again?" Shang Xin was confused as she looked at Shang Ling's direction. In almost a second, Shang Xin's eyes enlarged like

saucers, as her face froze along.

"W-Was this an illusion?" Shang Ling was wondering if he was daydreaming.

"Yes. It is. It has to be!" Shang Xin was definitely daydreaming.

They looked at each other as they had come into agreement, shouting simultaneously, "It's an illusion!"

Seeing that bright smile of Shang Lan, both of the bystanders could hardly believe the fact that the shrinking violet Younger Sister Lan was the girl dancing joyfully with a man on the dance floor.

"What enchantment of this Wang Xing?" Shang Ling was very intrigued of the working behind this.

"What intention of this Wang Xing?" This was what Shang Xin truly cared.

Of course, Ye Chong was unaware of these comments at all. He remained attentive at Shang's instruction as he treated the whole session as a kind of body reaction training instead.

Shang Lan looked into the eyes of this man with a frozen heart before him. Her lips shaking, as they were lifted into jolly curves. Back on the dining table she had noticed such an extraordinary man who would chomp throughout his course. She was amused by it for she had never seen a grown man eating in such a manner, he must be an interesting kind! If she could have ever tried it once... sadly the education she had been receiving was against it. He then spent the night of soirée all alone at the corner, not talking to anybody - just like how she had always been. Somehow, an urge to invite him for a dance seized her mind. She was actually body-and-soul ready for a rejection from this cold man. He was too cold, freezing cold, that he even disregarded the greetings from Sister Xin and Brother Ling occasionally. He seemed totally unapproachable! B-But! I did not expect him to accept my offer

right after a moment of silence!

Their faces were very close to each other, that she could discern every single detail of his face. The indifference of his, the dignity in him and those marks after struggles of survivals... His expression was all solemn and stern by then, which looked like... the face of Brother Ling when he piloted his mech.

You could get this serious when dancing? Such an odd man!

She realized how the man had never noticed her observation, her heart raced as her eyes went larger in caution... uncontrollably, the hint of smile tinted her face.

Shang Zhangming who had long perceived the strange behavior of his daughter after the kind reminder of his servants, had his eyes wet and filled with strong protectiveness as his body shuddered seeing the expression of her daughter while dancing.

And that was when Mr. Robert got enraged witnessing Ye Chong, the boy he had been attentive of, being with the daughter of Shang Zhangming. What a cunning merchant! For he actually could use her daughter to seduce my Wang Xing! Such charisma! Not! His blood boiled but with admiration.

"Well, Ye. Time for your last pose. When I said 'go', you toss her out. And you let go of your hand immediately once you tossed her out. Wait her to make a flip in the air. She would reach her hands for you when she is landing. You grab her hand and get her in your embrace. She would fall naturally into it, don't worry. You just lift her waist with your right hand. And remember! Do it gently! You are not kneading noodles! Don't exert brute force on a lady!" Shang simply did not want a romance to turn into a horror of a lass being torn apart by a monster called Ye Chong, considering the horrifying strength of his.

"Ok," responded Ye Chong. Phew, finally, it's ending. It felt more tiring than marble training.

"Go!" boomed Shang.

Ye Chong was ready for it! His left arm shook, from shoulder to the arm to the elbow to the wrist, like a wave rolling from the sea to the shore!

Shang Lan could feel a potent yet gentle force pushing her upwards. She was lifted into the air as her hand felt a loss in weight. A never-before-felt excitement stimulated her soul. She was all exhilarated as she heard the sound her dress made as the inflowing air breathing through her. It felt refreshing!

The split second she was landing, she reached out her fair slender arms. Before she could ponder of how to land, an arm grabbed her and a whirlwind dragged her down. Soon her nose was poked with a scent of masculinity. She knew, she knew! She had melted into the embrace of this man.

At that moment, a breath of soul raided the neck of the naive girl.

The last move was an unblemished record to Ye Chong's dancing, even Shang could not get a flaw to criticize with, though it had certainly frightened the spirit out of the Shangs. They feared to see the doll to fall into a million pieces. If that were to happen, Wang Xing this damned man must be thrown into a shredder!

The current posture between two of them was rather suggestive. Shang Lan collapsed in his embrace, with the right hand holding her waist. Her face was only 2 to 3 centimeters away from... from...

Shang Lan's brain was partially jammed.

Ye Chong had his eyes fixed on the lady in his embrace. That creamy neck of hers, that rolling eyes of hers in lingering stimulation, bewitching... he could feel a kind of heat rumbling in his stomach... The white garb, the smooth skin flashed in his head... The fist, of utter force... The girl he was holding somehow was emanating the identical, peculiar scent from the girl he had been with before...

For some reason, he lowered his head intuitively as he gently gave a lick on her neck!

Chapter 179: Undercurrent I

When Ye Chong got back to his room he could already feel his bones crumbling, as he had been applying full force over his body muscles to perform that freaking Doronath Step instructed by Shang the love tutor. The main issue of the performance was to inhibit the force of his hand. Shang demanded gentleness and elegance in every movement he made, which put him under obligation to remind himself to not exert his inhuman strength from time to time. And that was literally new to him. To top all that, Shang just had to repetitively nag in his head to retain the flexibility of his body in the postures. It took countless of times with the artificial indulgence's harassment before Ye Chong acquired the sense of flexibility in his body, which was exactly the split second of relaxation of his muscle right before he sprang into action every time. Well that was undeniably a torment to Ye Chong, as maintaining the posture of anticipation was bringing an overwhelming amount of burden to his body and mind, which unavoidably boiled down as the main cause to his fatigue at the moment.

Regarding to that final blow he delivered... Ye Chong had yet gotten any idea what the heck happened in his head that time. He did not foresee what the lick of his would have caused which led to an uncontrollable development of his story.

The two major spectators of the entire show in the dark, in their finest suit and dress, had their faces dramatically bloomed into something unrecognizable. Too bad Ye Chong missed their epic reaction, as he only heard the sound of glasses shattering upon falling onto the ground, which shocked Ye Chong awake from the strange condition of his after that lick. He was surprised of seeing himself acting so, as he quickly retreated his hands upon seeing the reddish face of the lady in his embrace. Shang Lan had lost control of her body by then. However, as she could not stand properly with

the sloppy feet of hers, she fell into the embrace of Ye Chong again. The man in confusion could only helplessly reach his hands out to hold the poor lady once more.

Right when Ye Chong was figuring an appropriate solution for this mishap of his day, Shang Xin and Shang Ling were already racing towards him. Shang Xin lifted the melted sister of hers and fired a glare at Ye Chong, while Shang Ling... he was giving a very strange gaze at Ye Chong for some reason. As usual, Ye Chong wasn't concern about the thoughts of others, as he expressed ignorance. The arrival of the two spectators resolved his issue of carrying this melted girl perfectly. The girl as lifted by her sister, gave a quick glance at Ye Chong before she left. Her watery eyes flowed a sign which Ye Chong could not comprehend. It was the first time he saw it, was it anger? Or was it something else?

Well. No use crying over spilled milk. What happens, happens. Ye Chong was too lazy to give more thoughts to the accident. But it was weird, somehow, that white garb flashed in his head during the dance... Ye Chong laughed bitterly.

The artificial indulgence had gone full rampage with his laughter ever since that historical lick Ye Chong made on the girl.

"Shang, why could I not resist doing that back then?" Ye Chong could not understand the working of this back when he was shocked awake.

"Mhm, biologically speaking, it is a kind of intuition. A kind of built-in ability." Shang sounded serious when he spoke... for the first 2 seconds, "Hahahahahahahahahahaha!" And he burst out laughing once more, "Ye, you are too strong! You are a potent beast! Yes you are! The intuition of the beast! The definition of nature! Hahahahahahahahaha!" Shang's mechanical laughter roared in his head.

Towards this artificial indulgence, despite the annoyance, Ye Chong could do nothing about him. The saving grace to his

misfortune was that Shang's personal 3 hours ended pretty soon after. Mu's silence of rationality sent Ye Chong to a peaceful sleep quickly afterwards.

Oh hell he knows... that the outside had gone hectic, chaotic.

"Have you found anything on Wang Xing?" Shang Zhangming's face was of a fearsome black hole, as his voice rumbled profoundly, since he was also one of the witnesses to one of the best moments in the history of humankind. He could reminisce how his head had blanked out completely, his thoughts jammed into BSOD. He was sentimental thinking of how his younger daughter was behaving lonesome during the days before. It was heart-wrenching to see the blossom all alone at the corner. Still! The moment he recalled the night that jerk Wang Xing who actually was daring enough to do such a preposterous action over his precious Lan in public. Oh the temper erupted in his mind. "What the hell all of you are waiting for? Get to work!" Under his rage, the homicide could be smelled even under each word of his lines. His subordinates were threatened, trembling and acted cautiously with their work, as they feared of becoming one of the scapegoats to the incident.

"Y-yes, we got it sir. Wang Xing, 21, a native from planet Fedar. Parents were both deceased. No relative was found. Other information, unknown; examination, qualification of any level, any kind, negative!" The man reported in carefully.

"You took this long and this was all you could get?" Knotting his brows, looking slightly unsatisfied.

"As apparently this man is not in list of Mr. Robert's men and this information was obtained from the investigation under the demand of Ms. Shang Xin. We have just started it. Also, we were informed that only the butler of Mr. Robert, Bai Linan was aware of Wang Xing's background. Even Mr. Robert himself was unaware of the identity. Wang Xing got Ms. Shang Xin's attention on his prompt rescue during the raid at Mr. Robert. In addition, it seemed like he wields great skills," the man sounded fearful, but his words

remained concise and clear.

"Mhm." Shang Zhangming's tone sounded less threatening, as he understood how difficult the investigation was for his men, "Alright. All of you can excuse yourself. You have done well. But I would like all of you to keep an eye on this Wang Xing."

"Yes sir!" The man nodded his head immediately. He was supposed to leave yet his steps moved with hesitation. "What else?" Shang Zhangming understood the gesture, it was a sign that his men had something else to report, frowning, he asked.

"Reporting in. It is a piece of information we obtained from the virtual world," courteously the man started reporting. "The man whose I.D. was known as 'YC' had suddenly reappeared in the virtual world. And he was actually at the NR Training base on planet Rique. And according to the confirmation of our mavericks, this YC should be residing right on our planet. Well, sir, since you had ordered us to watch on this person, so..." The voice of the man sounded shaky.

And that was when Shang Zhangming remembered the fact that he did ask his men to follow up on this YC guy... that was something centuries ago however. "I see. I remembered it. Just keep watching." He tried to not sound irritated, since those were his trustworthy men, though he was literally suffocated by his daughter's misfortune, wondering how in the Rique he would have the mood to take care of this random player online.

The reemergence of YC the legend had once again brought up a storm in the virtual world.

Ye Chong was too focused on his training, that he again did not realize how the base on Rique also contained an automatic full-recording system, which he did not opt-out before logging in. Hence, every frame of his performance was recorded wholly. Even though Mu had already launched the anti-detection program on the merchants around, he did not take any further action, since the

merchants did not impose actual threat on Ye Chong.

There would be tons of void hologram visuals from the NR training base daily. Void as in, uninteresting, random and trivial. There would be workers specially selecting the masterpieces hidden within the trash, considering the chances of discovering visuals of some real deals in training. The visuals and the analyzed information on it would be most valuable to everybody else.

At the first second when the worker spotted the I.D. on the screen being YC, he knew he had hit the jackpot of the day.

As expected from YC, even his training course was a total shocker, for he actually thought of using the avoidable training room to master his stance and offenses. The worker was stupefied seeing the scene produced on the last training session of YC of the day.

He uploaded the visual to the public right away and had landed a bomb to the netizens in the virtual world.

Ye Chong might not be considered as the founder of mech close-combats, but he was certainly related to the rise of close-combats in the virtual world. Watching YC's visuals was known as a must-do to every mech combat enthusiast, especially when the techniques used inside could be deemed as the textbook for mech combats. One could almost be certain to state that, the reputation possessed by this YC guy was much greater than those ridiculous top ranked fighters in the virtual world. The sudden disappearance of YC two years before had always been a major mystery in the heart of the people.

The last match he had was against Invincible Firepower. Even though he lost the last match, people benefited from his experience as they absorbed the various techniques he used against ranged attackers.

Quitting because of losing? That came first as a speculation in the mind of most people, though it was debunked by some fans, taking

into account that it was not the YC's first losing match. He did not simply look like a coward who would retire because of losing.

There were a variety of versions for the ending of this legend, regarding on the hows and whys of his abrupt retirement. None of them was convincing to the people though, which eventually gave him a stronger vibe of mystery. And because of such vibe of mystery, YC became more charming to the people as he ascended to become the idol of many youngsters out there.

Majestic! A majestic performance it was absolutely! The majestic yet mysterious YC came in a flash, with visuals of his training open to the public and immediately was chased upon in madness. The streaming signal within Rique was about to be permanently interrupted by this immense amount of population surging the transmitter. Phew, what a horror to the department of signal transmitting maintenance.

Amazement! The lingering sensation of every viewer of the visual! The scenic sequence coming up like a dream had transformed into an unforgettable memory inside almost all witnesses.

The white veil shrouded like the silhouette of a phantom, with the photospheres conglomerating from all angles slowly to quickly, forming few times of slashes of white beams imprinting the corneas of the audience, as they were smashed upon the veil, shattering into countless specks of beam scattered all over the place.

People were astounded. YC had once again given every believer a taste of miracle after being cloistered away for 2 years.

Quite a number of pilots who held great confidence in their skills rushed upon the NR training base, as they inputted the exact room number, with the exact setting. They were confident, but none of them lasted more than 3 minutes inside. The strength of YC had been justified to the people, including the skeptical witnesses. And

there was one, wow, YC lasted 5 minutes in this room of terror? What a quick response he gave. Spectacular! Anyone who had tried the training room with their own bodies could understand by heart. When the timer hit the 3rd minute, the velocity of the photosphere and the number of them would be increased tremendously. So far only YC was able to surpass the cursed 3rd minute mark as proven by his visual.

YC and his new unique trading course had become the hottest topic on the network for some time.

Ugh! Looked at the paused timer at 3:59, the man sighed. He had tried his very best. It was depressing as he was also using a Polysky, but he just could not make it past the 4th minute mark. He seriously could not imagine how there would be one man who could last 5 minute in this room. If it was not the visual he would never buy that statement. Pathetically he had witnessed the miracle and his experience had verified the validity of the visual.

The name of YC, he had perceived it before. The visuals of YC, he had watched some of them before. Yes, a few moments of YC was an eye-opener, but YC was still weaker, considerably. He was positive to state that YC in the past might be identified as an expert in combat between mechs by the public, but never YC was once in his eyes. Nonetheless, the current standard of YC's skills were shocking to him. With his sight, naturally he would never be mesmerized by the majestic performance of YC like the others, what mattered to him was the extraordinary reaction speed, that exceptionally firm fundamentality as well as the skillfulness in combats of his expressed in this show.

He could say that, compared to YC two years before, it was of a total different tangent.

Never expected this YC guy could accelerate to such standard after hiding for 2 years.

Interesting. He smiled. Even though he failed to hit the 5th

minute mark in the room, he was not disappointed at all. Everyone has their own perks. He understood such principle of life way back. Reaction speed was never his perk, although the principle did not reduce his amazement over YC, since even No. A-6 whose reaction speed was known to be the highest was having issues to remain in the room past the 5th minute.

Nevertheless, Black Coves shall always be the strongest in combats. That was the very essence of mech combating. And he was the arsenal of the Black Coves, he would fear no one! This was his faith, his most potent faith. Being a man in pride absolutely had something in hand to be in pride of.

If I was ever able to fight with this YC guy, it has got to be an interesting chore to do. His interest towards YC grew.

The spread of news went outrageously rapid around the people. Soon, everybody else from outer space knew it, that there was this recording from Rique of YC's performance at the training base. No actual geographical boundary existed in the vast virtual world, even though signal would inevitably suffer from loss over long distance transmission disregarding the type or the power of it. So a highly demanded virtual facility like the NR training base would be set up on every planet. Thus, the netizens' habit of lingering at their own training base, instead of checking out on others, since obviously the delay would be much lesser.

Despite all that, innumerable amount of people flooded the NR training base, with the hope of encountering the legendary YC in person. The NR training base for the pilots was crowded for the following days, as people including his worshippers, the challengers and spectators, grabbed that one in a million chance of seeing YC. One could easily find a thread talking about this mysterious YC on the network daily. The different analysis based on his latest visual were especially massive of them.

...

Zzzz

And that was when Ye Chong, who had already submerged into his slumber out of the fatigue from grooves, was literally unaware of anything that happened outside.

Chapter 180: Undercurrent II

People were everywhere inside the training base. Sadly there were hardly any of them in the actual training room. Countless pillars stood at the lobby of the NR training base, with countless people surrounding them. Everyone left and returned, as they tapped to activate the partially transparent interface again and again. A swift glance over the list and disappointment stormed upon their faces.

...

"Excuse me, De Gong, if it was not for your harmless act of submitting the visual of that ludicrous YC guy online, we wouldn't have to suffer like this now," ranted one of the members of the maintenance department at the NR training base.

The staff whose name was addressed as De Gong laughed bitterly as he replied, "How would I think this much ahead? I got so hyped up that I just clicked the "submit" button on a whim. I seriously did not reckon these maniacs going this mad, riding their spaceships and traveling all the way here! If I would have foreseen such insanity, I would have clicked to cancel. Just to save the trouble for us." Well, that was what he said, though his expression contained a dash of honor.

"Sigh, that aside, what on Rique do you think these people were doing?" inquired another member from the side.

"I know right! No one would know who the heck that YC guy truly is as long as he stayed quiet about it!" agreed one of the members to that statement.

In the virtual world, the appearance of the character would have about 80 to 90% similarity to the actual person in reality by default. That was not applicable however, since people could always modify their appearance after logging into the virtual world. So the definite appearance of the person online holds no

direct relation to the appearance offline. As the staff had mentioned, it would be indeed a difficulty to determine one's identity online.

That was why the conversation happened.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk!" De Gong snatched the spotlight as he spoke, "Both of you are quite new here I supposed. Of course you wouldn't know this place well enough! Heh! Regarding your issue of identification, our center, this very base, has its own perks you know," the answer came off flaunting.

"Oh really?"

"How?" both of them hurriedly asked.

"Hehe, well, all users must have a name registered at the MPA before using the NR facilities, like 'YC' for instance. Hell knows what his real name is, but as long as he is in the facility, he would be known as 'YC'. As you are aware of, every NR training base is interconnected with MPA. To even own the rights to use the NR facilities, one must have their names registered," while jiggling his head, he said playfully.

"That was why we could not tell who he really is!" one staff replied.

"Yeah, it's not like there would be a nameplate written 'YC' floating on top of his head," added the other staff.

"Well, looks like both of you aren't aware of it. If this YC guy logged in and only took a stroll at the facility, no one would recognize him, even if he spent a week loitering at the lobby. The catch is, the moment he picked a room and accessed it, disregarding what training he was going to participate, he would be exposed! Anyone who have spent long enough at the training base would know, that very second you made your entry, you would be found on the terminal at the lobby. This is why all of you have never heard of people impersonating this YC, since no matter

how hard the person claimed to be YC, his or her identity would be uncovered when the access was done, which justified the crowd at the lobby all day long. Didn't you see them refreshing the data on the terminal constantly? Yes, they are trying to find YC out using such a way," De Gong explained patiently.

"Well, aren't they stupid? For they are blind-waiting."

"If you say so, so be it. They are blind-waiting, they only wanted to test out their luck," shrugged De Gong as he spoke.

...

The moment when Ye Chong woke up was the morning after that. He had already recovered from the fatigue last night after a whole night of sufficient sleep. The unaware boy never expected the chaos occurring at the Shang family currently after that historical lick he committed last night.

The family meeting among the Shangs ended at 3 o' clock... in the morning! And the attendants were none other than Shang Zhangming and his wife, Shang Ling and Shang Xin. For Shang Lan, she did not participate the meeting this time for some reason.

That knotted brows of Shang Zhangming had hardly loosened since then. He glanced upon his wife, "Xin, how do you see this Wang Xing?"

His wife was in her fifties, a well-maintained fifties specifically, as she looked like in her thirties - poised, grand and amiable - which gave off a friendly vibes to people around. They were a loving husband-and-wife.

"What's the worry, my Ming?" chuckled the lady.

Shang Zhangming forced a smile, "The happening tonight is terrible. I no longer know how to deal with it!" Shang Zhangming had always been pampering his youngest daughter, Shang Lan. Regretfully, Shang Lan had always been extremely introverted. Other than the brothers and sisters in her family, she had barely

interacted with the outside world. The two heads of the family were wondering if she had psychological disorder of some kind at the beginning, they had sought consultations from numerous psychologists. She had undergone various treatments, counseling sessions... none of them worked. Shang Lan remained her withdrawn self, which explained how the entire family spoiled this little princess a lot.

Shang Zhangming's descendants, there were 5 of them. The eldest son died after contracting a strange disease at the age of 1. The second eldest being his daughter, Shang Yue; the third being Shang Xin, the fourth would be his son, Shang Ling. And Shang Lan was clearly the youngest among them.

Shang Zhangming was rather satisfied of his children. Shang Yue was calm and resourceful, wise and capable; Shang Xin was strong and dignified, tenacious the whole time; Shang Ling was talented, a gentleman of nobility with a sensitive mind; Shang Lan, however... was the most of his worry. She often was in a stance of melancholy, a heart-wrenching sight to behold.

"Apparently, Sister Lan was the one who initiated the dance." It took a moment of hesitation of Shang Xin to spit out the truth.

"Oh? Lan, my daughter actually invited someone else for a dance?" the lady of the family was shocked, while her husband was in utter disbelief the first time he heard the news. Throughout the aftermath, he had been assuming that Wang Xing was the wolf who proactively spoke to his daughter, which gave off a dubious vibe of his motive to Shang Zhangming... but then if it was initiated by his daughter, the whole dance should not be part of some diabolical master plan.

Still... Lan my beloved invited someone for a dance... and it's a man? A man she never came across before in her entire life? Shang Zhangming could feel his nerves getting a short-circuit.

"I had seen that Wang Xing before during our course. What a way

he ate...," spoke his wife, in bit of interests. Both Shang Ling and Shang Xin put up a grin upon hearing their mother said so. Shang Zhangming was having an awkward expression at the side.

"Wang Xing's appearance, I must say, is merely average. I have no idea which part of his attracted my Lan...," his wife sounded curious as she spoke.

"Me neither. Supposedly our daughter should have never met the man before... but why this now...?" Shang Zhangming could not get it despite all these while he had been thinking.

"Background of this man... may I ask?" His wife shifted her focus to Shang Xin, as her eyes expressed inquiries. Shang Xin was technically in charge of the security and information management in the family.

"It's unknown they say!" Shang Zhangming seized the mic, "I had asked our men. They only managed to find out the fact that he's from Fedar, Fal. The odd thing about this man is he did not have any record of assessment on his skills. No other information was found other than these."

"Impossible!" Shang Xin was not convinced. She and her brother Shang Ling were busy dragging their younger sister Shang Lan back to her room right after the event. The mistress of the family rushed to the place and began inquiring them. So they never had the chance to check out details about this Wang Xing.

"Why? What's the matter?" hurried the mistress.

"Wang Xing is exceptionally skillful in combats. How could there not be records of any form of assessment before?" Shang Xin could still reminisced that epic toss by Wang Xing. Conquering a distance of 68 meters by a simple throw of dagger while retaining the strength and accuracy, a man capable of this had no record of assessment? The society was well-facilitated with assessments suitable for all sorts of expertise from all walks of life, which was the essential requirement for any occupation in the market. And

an oddity like Wang Xing who lacked record of assessments would be a creepy sight frankly...

"Not a problem." Shang Zhangming did not find it as weird, "A lot of the descendants of aristocrats hadn't ever taken part in those assessments. Even families that lasted ages would not be surprising to have such a tradition. It's just that you had not seen enough, my daughter," he waved his hands as he stated.

"Ah." Shang Ling somehow recalled something of that night, "Assuming that he is truly a descendant of the aristocrats... or even someone from an ancient family, it is actually not far-fetched. I have seen him using the Double Knife Ceremony back on that night during the course. Such ceremony is only used among some of the truly ancient families," stated his judgement.

Shang Zhangming turned his head to Shang Xin, "Ask the men to inquire about the aristocrats on Fedar, Fal, including families which had existed a long time ago, especially those with the surname Wang." He literally never thought of the possibility that Wang Xing could have been a result of modification of personal information...

Shang Xin responded with a nod, keeping that in her mind.

"Excuse me..." A key question suddenly came into the mistress's mind, "Have any of you asked Lan her thoughts on this?"

Shang Xin and Shang Ling looked at each other, they expressed peculiarity towards the question. It took them a while before Shang Xin decided to reply, "After that jerk Wang Xing kissed Sister Lan, she collapsed in his hold! We were so afraid that this terrible beast would do something more outrageous on our sister so we rushed to the scene and grabbed her away. On the way back to her room, she did not say a word." Since they were farther away from the scene, the licking of Ye Chong looked more like kissing.

"What was her expression?" asked the mother in panic.

"Hmm..." Both of them pondered a little, Shang Ling was trying to put his thoughts into words, "It seemed like... she was not really angry...?" He turned his face to Shang Xin, awaiting confirmation from his sister. "Mhm..." Shang Xin tried recalling it as well, showing approval, "Sister Lan did not look really angry in fact..."

"Hmph!" Her father seemed angry though, as his face tightened. Anyone could tell how exceedingly angry the man could be upon seeing his precious being kissed by a stranger like Wang Xing.

"Don't do anything funny, honey." His wife gave him a stare. The atmosphere brightened somehow, as the wrath on his face faded away. Shang Xin was smirking along with her brother, thinking of how amusing it was to see their father behaving like the hero at the public, but was well-trained by his delicate wife at home. "Lan is a headstrong girl. If she really has something to that man, whatever all of you did to him would only hurt Lan eventually."

"As expected from my lovely Xing, thoughtful and kind!" Grinned Shang Zhangming, that brave and bold self of his was nowhere to be seen...

"Sighs, we've got to wait for Yue first. Lan had only been talking to Yue by heart slightly... Fortunately she's coming back in two days." The mistress then lifted her slender arms, as she pointed to everyone in the room, "Before Lan's thoughts on this get unfolded, none of you are allowed to make a move. Watch that man carefully and make sure he is in one piece instead!" She looked a little naive as she spoke.

"Xing my dear, no worries! I shall guard that man till the end!" Shang Zhangming made his promise right away. He did it so fast that it made both Ling and Xin smiled smugly again.

If Shang Zhangming's men ever saw their leader being so underwhelmed, imagine their reaction...

Chapter 181: Undercurrent III

Everything looked normal from the outside, as if nothing had happened the night before, even though the men of the Shang family appeared to be vigorously engaged as they went in and out of the house. That was because of Mr. Robert's fresh arrival with his crew the day before. Considering how tiresome the travel Mr. Robert had, these men at home had their tasks reallocated, rescheduled to accommodate Mr. Robert's visit. No other task was arranged on the list for the day.

Early in the morning, Bai Linan was summoned by his boss, Mr. Robert.

Ye Chong on the other hand, as informed by Ah Duan that he was free to go anywhere, he alone left the hectic house. What he needed to do was to collect his identity card. Although Mu hacked into the system and had fabricated an entry of Wang Xing in the resident list, he did not have a physical card to prove and reassure his identity. So he left, hurriedly, and certainly he was followed. Luckily it was nothing new to our sky-walking Ye Chong, he was well-aware of the routes, the turnings to take to get rid of the followers. There were few tiny flocks of them but all of them were magically slung away.

There was not much of a hassle when Ye Chong got his card and got back to the Shang family. He hid himself in his room right after that, which left the watchdogs of the Shang family in blank dismay, looking at each other as they lost Ye Chong in the dark.

Ye Chong logged into the virtual world after getting into his room. Certainly he was not caught red-handed. The mavericks employed by the Shang family to watch the action of this man were utterly cloaked by Mu's hacking to the gate. They were completely unaware of Ye Chong's activity online.

Logging in...

Success.

Ye Chong came straight to the NR training center. The sight before him was bewildering.

The lobby was full of people, where every pillar was surrounded by them.

"Mu, do you know what had happened?" inquired Ye Chong.

"I need 20 seconds." He seriously had no idea what in the virtual world Mu had been busy with these days, obviously his attention was never on Ye Chong.

It was not hard to tell from the crowd that their behavior consisted of a strong objectivity, as Ye Chong observed curiously. Their expression explained it all, even though Ye Chong could not pinpoint what their objective was.

20 seconds lapsed quickly. "Ye." Mu's emergence equals to an answer, "They are waiting for you."

"Waiting for me?" Ye Chong went speechless, as he simply did not expect the crowd having anything to do with he himself, especially when he recognized none of them...

"Yes. Precisely... they are waiting for YC," stated Mu.

"YC? Isn't YC me?" Ye Chong sounded confused, showing difficulty in comprehending Mu's words.

"Thus, they are looking for you," explained Mu.

Mu's explanation did not seem helpful to Ye Chong in any way. The mechanical partner eventually had to explain everything from the very beginning. He got it. But then again, he did not. He got the working behind this but he did not get what the people were thinking. To him, these behaviors looked inconceivable. The more unexplainable thing was, never once he imagined that people, of such amount, would succumb to such method of zero efficiency and measly probability.

Leaving this training center immediately became the wisest choice to Ye Chong at that moment.

He moved onto the other training bases after that but... there were all as crowded... which made him wonder if there was actually anybody still doing their training there.

Thanks to Mu's hacking, Ye Chong was led to the training center with the least amount of people.

As guaranteed by Mu, the place was absolutely deserted. The lobby was empty. It was the first time Ye Chong saw such isolated training center online.

"Eh, Mu, what's with this place? It's all empty and such?" asked Ye Chong. He had been through training bases of a variety of places, but he had never come across one that was so empty.

"This place was formerly known as planet Haberda. As the environment of the planet worsened over the years, a massive evacuation of residents was performed 15 years ago. This should be one transmitting station that got abandoned abruptly, as the processor was still running and the local NR training center has yet to be demolished. The actual reason behind this : unknown," stated Mu. This place happened to be the NR training center for pilots with the least amount of population.

"Oh I see." Ye Chong did not inquire further. Regarding why the residents were evacuated and where the heck they had migrated to, Ye Chong's curiosity was not that great to ask those yet.

Ye Chong first walked to one of the pillars and tapped gently with his finger. A partially transparent interface emerged before him. Ye Chong took a brief browse on the population. There was no one else but him at the center.

Mu went silent after the last explanation he made. Ye Chong could tell Mu was no longer right by his side. Whenever Mu laid his hands on the virtual world, somehow he just vanished,

vaporized into the thin air. No one knew what he was doing the whole time. Ye Chong even inquired Shang regarding this, though Shang could not give him a satisfying response.

Ye Chong randomly entered one of the photosphere avoidability training room. The training before was pretty entertaining to him, although he only lasted for 5 minutes at most.

The room was completely dark, the photospheres utterly innumerable, they danced in an increasing speed, like a moth towards the flame, heading towards Ye Chong rapidly.

...

Dammit! Dammit!!!

Wei Yuan cursed numerous times at his instructor in his mind. That old crap! That old tard from nowhere! That erotic eyes of his should have rotten in hell! I could see his pig eyes glowing in dark the moment a female trainee passed by. What a shame among the instructors! A total rubbish of humanity!

Wei Yuan's instructor was an odd-tempered elderly with a lonesome personality... only to the male trainees of course. Towards the female trainees, he would regain his function in society, he would suddenly become the best teacher in the entire galaxy, which turned every other male trainees into a green-eyed monster, wondering why they were not an XY species when they were born. The pilot profession had a trend of growing population of females, even though males stood an absolute advantage in population. Sadly, the class where Wei Yuan was in had literally a majority of female pilots-to-be. Sim that old bum was well-accorded by the ladies, like every single batch of female seniors would compliment his passion and kindness, which eventually caused this class conducted by the old man himself to be overpopulated by the females from pilot profession.

Wei Yuan was agonized the moment he stepped into the class. He had always been remorseful over his silly choice of registering this

class. Wei Yuan's uncle was also a teacher in this academy, he was from the same profession too. But he insisted recommending Sim that old bum to Wei Yuan's parents, claiming that Mr. Sim was the expert of the experts in the academy, an experienced teacher.

Expert of the experts? Puh-lease! Wei Yuan had criticized that blurb of that old bum for countless times. I could only see inexpert of the inexperts, someone just missed out the "in-" prefixes when they spoke! He had spent quite some time attending his classes, yet never once he saw his instructor actually in action. Most of his classes were on theory; when it came to practical there had to be one pilot he got from nowhere to do the demonstration for him. The only satisfaction was, these pilots he got turned out to be some real deals, where quite a few of them were actually an ace pilot.

Wait! Stop! I'm not going to think about that old bum anymore! What for I'm thinking those nonsense? Only to spoil my mood! And Wei Yuan tossed Sim old crap directly out of his brain.

Coming home, I'm coming home~ His home was rather distant from the academy, yet he was able to make it home within a very short amount of time, all thanks to his exceptional piloting skills. He might be a mere trainee studying the pilot profession but he was still superior in his piloting. Piloting was generally about the flight ability of one pilot on a mech, which was vital to every pilot out there.

Wei Yuan was somehow born with a unique understanding towards piloting. Whenever he saw the objects flying by hurriedly on the screen as he travelled in an overwhelming speed, he felt an unexplainable excitement growing in him, that it bit onto his nerves! Those namely No.1 speed-pilots in his academy were a total joke in his eyes.

Unfortunately, his talent was limited to solely piloting. None of the other aspects was an eye-opener, with shooting being chiefly a major headache to him. He somehow was cursed into a slowpoke in this. No matter how hard he worked, he only could pass at most.

He never aced the subject, which was depressing!

Not to mention how that old bum never gave him meaningful instructions, he would, at most, say things like "Take it slow. Take it easy." Not helpful at all! Wei Yuan even felt like giving that old bum a punch right on his donkey face!

...

"I'm home," Wei Yuan greeted at the doorstep slothfully.

"Oh," a man's voice rang from the house. Wei Yuan had been living with his father since his mother passed away not too long after his birth. He had been relying on his father deeply. His father was an engineer, also a work maniac. Once he turned on his engine, one did not expect him turning it off so soon. He would ignore the time, the days and nights, the rise of the sun, the fall of the moon. So there were times where Wei Yuan felt miraculous of himself, for he was never starved to death.

He got back to his room, collapsed on his fluffy bed. He looked at the ceiling, reflecting that face of his advanced in years ahead of his age.

His mind wandered off...

If mommy was still alive... Only if she was still alive, it would be good... isn't it? He had viewed the visuals of his mother many times. And he got to admit that no one else was as beautiful as his mother. The fair white ceiling somehow formulated the visual of his mother again... Zzz... His sight grew blurry, sleepy he had gotten.

Sighhh... Right before he fell asleep, he gave off a long sigh. He then lost consciousness as fallen to slumber.

When Wei Yuan woke up, it was already midnight. He scurried to the kitchen and grabbed a quick bite. He peeked at his father's room. The light was still on. Wei Yuan with a slice of vanilla cake in his mouth, dragging his steps in slippers, headed back to his

room.

He prompted the program and logged into the virtual world after that.

What he intended to go was a long-abandoned training center for pilots. It was an accident when he discovered such a place. He found it peculiar as there was nobody back then. Skeptically he tested out the facilities inside and to his surprise, they all worked! The place had become his private training ground ever since. He spent his days doing tough trainings there. None of his mates would know the fact that bottomline shooting grade of his was a result of his tremendous handwork at this private training ground.

To his mates, he was just another lazy, laid-back person in the class, especially with his extreme low-profiled behavior in the academy. Nobody seemed to know his skillfulness of piloting. His appearance was average. An ordinary head, an ordinary shape of face, an ordinary physique, you wanted to know his charm? Hah! What a joke, his charm was ordinary too. No matter what angle you took to see him, he was easily overlooked as he truly was. Never once he had gotten a proposal or love letter from the girls, despite his age.

Living in his own world, he pursued his own dream.

And that isolated training center, was his very own world, his own kingdom!

He got to the lobby. It was empty as usual. Well, my own kingdom is claimed as my own for a reason. Forever alone, sigh! He shook his head, wondering what had gotten to his sentiments. Chuckled, he settled his thoughts and was going to start his training course.

He remembered that he saw some amazing visuals by YC lately. It was yesterday when he watched YC's spectacular performance at the photosphere room. He never imagined one to be this potent.

Wei Yuan recognized his own strength in mech-combats that he barely practiced before. He never had the idea of trying it once. Being a trainee to the pilot academy, he was well aware the difference between reality and virtual world. Yes, close-ranged attackers were mushrooming on the virtual world, they were expanding their forces. Still, in reality, ranged attackers were at an absolute upper hand in a fight, since you only have one life there... No one would really gamble that one life using those suicidal techniques in the virtual world. You guard your own life, if you don't, you die! Moreover, ranged attacking had undergone years of development and had matured during the process; unlike close-combats, the efficiency, the outcome of it still remained questionable to the public.

Nonetheless, Wei Yuan wanted to try the photosphere room once. Yes, those glowing spheres some people called it, would be something great to try out. Of course, he would not be doing the stance training like YC, he was going to train his avoidability.

The glowing sphere room was never a thing to him before. At the training center, he frequented the basic training room the most. The piloting of his was the outcome of the training. He believed, as long as he redid his basics again and again, they would never fail him in the future.

It was his first time using the glowing sphere room... Wei Yuan actually had no idea of its location. In the end he returned to the lobby and picked one of the interfaces at the pillars. Launching the terminal, activating the self-inquiry system to resolve his issues.

He booted the guide program, as names of several training rooms were listed. W-wait, what? Wei Yuan went astounded.

Occupied? There's someone here? How?

He could not believe his eyes. Did I see it right? He rubbed his eyes and went to check it out again. Yes, there was someone! And that someone was occupying the glowing sphere room!

What's the ID? How comes, I don't even—

YC?

YC? ... YC? Where have I heard this before? Wei Yuan had a gut feeling that he must have heard of this name before but he could not recall... wait... glowing sphere room? YC?

Ah! YC? Isn't that YC the YC I saw?

He remembered!

Didn't I just watch his visual last night? What a pig I am! He scolded for his silliness.

For one who logged on to the virtual world daily like him, no way he could not recognize YC. He might not be a mech combating maniac, he had at least witnessed some of the well-known battles YC did online.

The training center here, despite being completely abandoned, remained connected to the MPA. So if one would like to use the facilities inside, one got to perform registration. So Wei Yuan was not skeptical over the validity of this "YC" popped on the screen.

He was only intrigued that... how YC found this place? Was it also a coincidence like how I did?

More likely excitement brewed inside him though. It's YC! YC you know! He's the big shot of the virtual world! And is an assured ace of the mech combats! While the outside went bananas in search of YC the mystery, he was just right here, right in front of me!

Hahahaha! Today is my lucky day!

Without further ado, without hesitating, he clicked ENTER and prompted himself access to the glowing sphere room.

Chapter 182: Undercurrent IV

Even though he had seen the holographic recording last night, Wei Yuan was still deeply moved when he saw it in person!

He stood dumbstruck, without moving a muscle!

Marvel! An absolute marvel! He watched in enchantment, his mind empty except for the bright glowing circle, the glowing spheres and its vanishing fragments, and the barely visible shadows of the mech.

Training rooms could be secured with a password to avoid disturbing the user. Ye Chong had never made it a habit to do so, and that was why Wei Yuan could enter easily! Ye Chong did not notice him, since his training required intense concentration, and he could not afford distractions.

While he still could not break through the five minute mark, Ye Chong could feel that he was gradually improving. People had tried to incorporate normal combat skills into mech battles, and he was but only one of them. Besides, now that he thought about it, when he got into a fight with Instructor Hak, the instructor had used similar moves, which he did not notice then. Ye Chong was almost certain that Black Cove was miles beyond everyone else in this field.

Ye Chong knew his own strength. With his level, he was nothing compared to Black Cove, and that was why he was very vigilant against them. Nonetheless, he did not give up because of this. Even if he was meager in skills compared to Black Cove's mech pilots, he could still feel himself improving bit by bit.

Mu's suggestion to train this way, for example, had helped him tremendously.

Ye Chong no longer fought mechanically. The recording of the two combat experts on the Nast had helped him greatly. The

moves demonstrated and the strategizing involved had deeply influenced Ye Chong.

Tissot's battle moves were based on from the recording of the two combat experts. They were basic moves that those two experts used most frequently in their battle, and suitable for easy learning.

However, Ye Chong was not entirely unadaptable. Normal battles and mech battles were different, so he did not imitate the moves exactly, but modify them incrementally to make them suitable for mechs. As for whether these modifications could work, he would only know in actual combat!

Ye Chong could not control his body very well, and imitating the moves was not too difficult. However, maneuvering the mech to reproduce those moves was a different story. A slight change in movement could lead to a disproportionate increase in difficulty in maneuvering. Ye Chong finally understood why the basic moves for mech battles that he learned earlier were all so simple.

Fortunately, Ye Chong could move his hands very fast, allowing him to make Tissot execute the moves!

Ye Chong trained diligently. As he grew used to the maneuverings, his quick hand speed could finally be put to good use. The more he practiced on each move, the faster he could execute them. This was reflected by the longer and longer time Ye Chong spent for each training round in the room.

"I'm new to this, so plenty of training is necessary! Sigh, if only I can cure this strange illness in me, then I can find a planet to stay where no one knew me. As long as I'm careful, the chances of Black Cove, the Sanctuary or the MPA finding me will be very small!

"Then I'll be able to do all the things I'm interested in, researching in mechs, practicing mech combat, normal combat, alchemy, make some skeleton mechs, I can even practice meditation ..."

Lost in his thoughts, Ye Chong suddenly found that he had plenty of things of he wanted to do, though he did not have the time, and found himself travelling often. Life was a mystery, it was like an invisible hand was controlling him, ushering him from one place to another. In truth, after the initial excitement, Ye Chong was getting tired of this kind of irregular lifestyle, and even grew to detest it a little. However, he must always stay alert, since any misstep could lead to disaster! Compared to this exciting life, he preferred and even yearned the simple and innocent life on the trash planet!

Ye Chong got distracted and was immediately hit by countless glowing spheres. The round was over!

"How could I be distracted during practice?" Ye Chong mocked himself, but quickly gathered his thoughts to resume his training.

Wei Yuan was shocked!

Heavens! Was this guy human? All those so-called elites at school were trash compared to this guy! This YC's mech piloting skills had reached the level of a professional.

Slowly, Wei Yuan began to notice something.

The almost solid looking glowing circle around the mech was gradually expanding outwards!

Yes, it was really expanding! Wei Yuan was afraid he saw wrong, and quickly called out his personal aide system and took a photo. About 10 seconds later, he took another shot. He used his personal aide system to calculate, and found that the glowing circle was indeed expanding outwards! Personal aide systems were automatically provided for each citizen in the virtual world, used mainly to assist in solving common problems in the place. It could also perform simple photon processor operations.

Wei Yuan could not help but grew excited!

For the whole duration he was watching YC, the glowing circle

formed by the glowing spheres was limited to a very small perimeter.

Now, however, this perimeter was gradually increasing. This also meant that YC's attack range was increasing! Wei Yuan was not YC's fan; he was not excited because YC managed to achieve this! Wei Yuan was excited because he knew that, with the increasing range of attack, YC would have to cover a larger area with his movements. This was what he was most interested in!

Since Wei Yuan was most confident with his mech piloting skills, he also wished to see what YC could do with his mech! Perhaps he can even learn a few tricks from him!

Wei Yuan watched with his eyes wide, unwilling to miss a single detail.

The glowing circle was slowly but surely expanding outwards!

The glowing circle expanded, as it also grew dimmer and more transparent. Wei Yuan could now see Tissot's figure more clearly beyond the glow.

As Wei Yuan suspected, when Tissot's attack range grew larger, Ye Chong had to make larger movements to cover the perimeter!

Wei Yuan stared at Tissot, noting every detail he could find!

As Wei Yuan watched on, his face turned a few shades paler! If anyone were in the room with Wei Yuan, they would clearly see his clothes turning moist; after a few minutes, it was thoroughly drenched, as though he was scooped out of the water. Large pearls of sweat rolled down from his face along the neck, now gathering together and forming rivulets!

In the virtual world, Wei Yuan did not exactly feel hopeless, but he was definitely very much affected!

Now, he had only one question on his mind - who was this YC, a monster like this?

Wei Yuan did not miss any of Tissot's movements, and that was why he was utterly shocked! With YC under the hood, Tissot moved like a spirit, like a machine come to life!

That was Wei Yuan's first impression!

As someone skilled in mech piloting, he was of course aware of the illusion!

The longer he watched, however, the more he sweated, and soon he could feel the damp chill on his spine!

The mech moved so quickly, as if impact mitigation was not a problem! Wei Yuan had seen Tissot stepped back quickly a few times, like breaking the laws of physics. The effect was almost supernatural!

Impossible! He almost jumped at the shock of realization!

Backward movements were a taboo for mech pilots! The movement was damaging to the mech, and a great burden for the pilot! Mech pilots could die from the maneuver!

What exasperated Wei Yuan the most was that YC had not only done it, but had did it repeatedly!

Was this guy really human? Wei Yuan groaned inside him! While no person could actually die in the virtual world, the environment was still modeled based on reality. Any moves that could be achieved here was very likely achievable in the real world!

With that, another thought came to him. No mech pilot would execute this move that could damage his mech, unless the situation demanded it. YC, however, had made this move during training. Strange indeed!

Wei Yuan believed that YC was not a mech pilot that did not take care of his mechs - there must be some reason for his actions! Since Wei Yuan could not understand this, he filed it away for the moment.

Fortunately, he had already activated his holographic recorder, else he would not be able to study it later!

Wei Yuan continued observing!

He was more and more horrified. That guy had maintained his speed even as the glowing circle expanded! The faster a mech moved, the harder it is to control it. Wei Yuan would not have believed it was possible to move a mech at such a high speed in a restricted area if he had not seen it first hand!

Wei Yuan made a back of the envelope calculation of YC's turning frequency, and the result was enough to make him even paler!

It was terrifying!

So this was the meaning of true strength! Wei Yuan's attitude gradually changed throughout his observation. He now understood that, compared to YC, he still had a long way to go!

This change in attitude made him more humble, and now he was eager to learn!

With this change in attitude, Wei Yuan noticed more problems. Logically speaking, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. However, YC had moved mainly with curved steps, and rarely did he take straight line steps. If he had not seen YC made a straight step backwards, Wei Yuan might have guessed that it was because YC could not handle the force that came with this change in momentum, and chose to take curved steps instead. However, since YC had taken straight steps backwards before, this was obviously not the reason, since that kind of motion produced that largest burden on the pilot.

Another problem to solve then. Wei Yuan reluctantly filed away this question as well for another time.

As he watched on, Wei Yuan began to move out of his dispirited state, and slowly felt encouraged again.

This was because he saw that there was still hope left for him through YC. Throughout his training, YC had only used basic mech footwork, simple but executed quickly. The mech's footwork was also comprised of only common techniques, only executed faster and more abruptly! There were no so called advanced level techniques!

Was this not the same for him? Wei Yuan found that he was actually very similar to YC in this respect! He felt like he could see himself in YC. He was not exactly interested in mech combat skills, but if he could learn to pilot his mech like that, that would be awesome!

While Wei Yuan grew absorbed in himself, Ye Chong had left the virtual world!

He was significantly less fatigued than last time. It seemed that Ye Chong was now stronger mentally! Due to his relationship with Robert, Ye Chong was treated as an honoured guest. Hence, Ye Chong did not hesitate to ask for servants of the Shang family to send him lunch.

"Ye, someone was watching when you were training!" Mu would only ever use neutral terms. If it was Shang, he would probably describe the act as peeping!

"Oh, who was it?" Ye Chong asked.

"Wei Yuan, male, 17 years old, current student of planet Richie's Wei Lan Academy in Year One, Class 107 ..." Mu had discreetly looked up Wei Yuan.

"Richie?" Ye Chong was a little sensitive to the place. Was that not his destination? What troubled him was that Wang Weixing would only return to the planet after about two months. As for the observer of his training, Ye Chong did not mind him so much.

"Hmm, the Shang family is a little weird. I must not stay for too long, best to leave soon!"

Ye Chong did not know that the Shang family's weirdness was related to him! Of course, he was also not aware that the girl he licked that day was the daughter of the head of the Shang family. While Shang Lan was also there during that banquet, Ye Chong was busy keeping his head down and eating.

"You're back!" Looking at the thin figure of his second daughter and her tired eyes, Shang Zhangming felt agony in the heart. Of all his children, his second daughter was the most reliable. Demure but intelligent, and a keen sense of people, she was the most authoritative figure in the Shang family, second only to her parents.

Combing her fringe to the side, Shang Yue smiled and said, "Yes, I'm back. The negotiations were successful! Nothing uneventful happened!" Shang Yue and Shang Lan looked very much like each other, but Shang Yue's face was more balanced, with a tiny mole above an eyebrow, adding a charming touch that differentiated the two sisters. Shang Lan was like a fairytale princess, adorable and fragile looking. Shang Yue, however, was like an attentive elder sister, a mature lady that could read one's heart.

"I see, go see your mother now!" Shang Yue was the most diligent in managing their family's affairs, and that was why Shang Zhangming felt most regretful for her.

However, the thought of the incident with Feng'er made his brows knit tightly together.

Shang Zhangming's expression did not escape Shang Yue's notice, but she did not ask about it, merely dutifully acknowledging her father's suggestion and headed towards her mother's room.

"What?" Calm as Shang Ye usually was, she still gasped in shock when her mother told her about that incident with her younger sister, Lan!

Mrs Shang also wore a troubled expression. She had worried over

this for the past two days. The rest of the Shang family were also tormented by the incident. Lan'er was everyone's beloved little princess, so her uncles were all up in arms about Ye Chong's behaviour, and would have gone to confront him directly if not for Shang Zhangming and his wife restraining them.

Shang Yue pondered over the issue before asking carefully, "What does Lan Lan think?"

Mrs Shang's expression soured even further. "Sigh, it's because we don't know what Lan'er is thinking that we're all troubled! We asked, but she never answered!" This was the root of the problem. No one knew what Lan'er thought of the matter, so none of them dared to make any moves against the cursed Wang Xing! What if, even in the slightest chance, that their princess took a liking towards this Wang Xing?

Mrs Shang's troubled expression was mostly an act. She knew that her youngest daughter was always solitary and disliked socializing. As she aged day by day, this nature of hers did not change. Under the doting love of her elder relatives and her elder cousins' care, she maintained an innocent heart. However, that was what worried Mrs Shang. Lan knew nothing of how the real world worked, and her solitary behavior had always made Mrs Shang worried for her future!

Mrs Shang had secretly arranged for many young and handsome men to introduce themselves to her youngest daughter, but every time without fail, her daughter would be scared as a rabbit, her fearful eyes a soft spot for all the older members of the family. This made Mrs Shang fret even more. All her attempts had met with failure, and Shang Lan expressed no interest in getting to know any of them. This was a constant worry for Mrs Shang!

However, that odd Wang Xing was now a sign of hope for Mrs Shang!

To think that Lan'er would invite him to dance by her own

initiative! When Mrs Shang first heard of it, she thought she heard wrong! However, when she found out that Wang Xing had kissed Lan'er, she almost fainted. She rushed to her daughter's room, for fear of Lan'er doing anything unexpected! However, when she arrived, Lan'er was pressing her face into her blanket, unwilling to talk, only moaning through the blanket. She had no idea whether Lan'er was really crying!

However, seeing that Lan'er was not doing anything dangerous, Mrs Shang relaxed, and could finally dedicate her mind to thinking about the incident. Her youngest daughter's future worried her most. If Lan'er can find a man of her choosing, Mrs Shang would accept him as he was. For a wealthy family like hers, political marriages were almost obligatory! Mrs Shang knew this, and so had asked for Shang Zhangming to swear before their wedding that their children would have the right to decide their own marriage partners, free of interference from anyone in the Shang family!

For Lan'er to react so violently against this man, how could Mrs Shang not detect the cracks in her emotions?

This desire was also noticed by Shang Yue.

Shang Yue and Shang Lan were very close to each other, and Shang Lan would ever share her thoughts with her second elder sister.

After absorbing the news, Shang Yue's heart finally calmed down. She swept her fringe and spoke steadily, "Alright, it looks like what's most important now is Lan Lan's thoughts on the matter. If we know that, the next step will be obvious!" Shang Yue had never felt so curious about a man like this. It was interesting that he could make Sister Lan react like that. If she was not about to visit Sister Lan now, Shang Yue would have headed straight to Wang Xing and see if he was actually born with three heads and six limbs!

Shang Yue came to Shang Lan's room and knocked twice lightly as she spoke softly, "Lan Lan, it's me!"

"Ah!" A tender voice came from within, and then some clunking sounds. Shang Yue could not help but smiled. The door opened into a tiny slit, revealing a pair of bashful eyes, looking carefully outside.

As expected, it was Shang Yue, alone. The door opened wide. "Second elder sis!" She exclaimed with a pleasant surprise, and leapt forward to embrace Shang Yue. Shang Yue held the little princess lightly in her arms, patting Shang Lan's back softly.

After the initial surprise, Shang Lan's glowing eyes began to mist.

"Second elder sis!" Her voice this time was closer to a sob, filled with unspoken grievance.

"Don't cry, don't cry, my good Lan'er!" Shang Yue's motions became even gentler as she consoled Shang Lan. "Let us go inside and talk!"

...

"You don't know how silly he looked like when he's eating! Like he's been starving for ages! I've never seen anyone eat like that in front of Daddy, not even Brother Ling!"

...

"It's even funnier at the ball! When Third Elder Sis and Brother Ling, and Third Elder Sis greeted him, do you know what he said? Heehee, he said, what do you want from me! Heehee, I've never seen anyone so dumb!"

...

"He stood alone in the corner, bored, like everyone around him was from a different world than him, what a lonely person! For some reason he reminded me of myself, and I almost cried! Second

elder sis, don't you dare laugh at me! I was really sad back then, I don't know, and I thought of asking him for a dance! I said don't laugh!"

...

"His dancing is quite peculiar, looking so serious all the time, heehee, but he's no good at it, he's so rigid, like a rock! But his steps were all so precise!"

...

"At the end he threw me high up, and it felt wonderful, it's like I was flying! His eyes were still so serious!"

...

"But in the end, he ... He ..."

...

After a long session with her sister, Shang Yue finally understood the entire incident!

Right now, all she wanted was to know more about Wang Xing. She believed she knew what Younger Sister Lan was thinking now; after meeting Wang Xing, she and her mother can then discuss on how to proceed.

Ye Chong was practicing meditation in his room. Mu had ascertained that the room had no surveillance in place - the Shang family probably would not dare to offend their honored guests!

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door.

Mu warned, "It's a woman!"

Ye Chong opened the door and saw a woman he had never met before! Ye Chong suddenly felt a wave of gratitude - luckily it was Mu right now and not Shang!

The woman spoke first, "Hi there, you must be Mr Wang Xing!"

"I am!" Ye Chong studied the woman casually. He quickly decided

that the other party could not harm him physically.

The woman smiled and spoke warmly, "I'm Shang Yue, hmm, the elder sister of that girl you danced with that day, may I come in?"

"The girl I danced with?" Ye Chong thought in surprise. This woman had a completely different aura than that princess! The woman before him now had a calm steadiness, a quality Ye Chong had never seen before in a member of the opposite sex. While Ye Chong knew he was not good at faces, he was still quite confident with his intuition.

Ye Chong did not know why she was here, but he still stepped to the side and replied plainly, "Please!"

They stood face to face, close to each other. This suited Ye Chong - at this distance, if the other party did any sudden movements, she would not be able to avoid his attack.

Ye Chong looked straight into her eyes, and Shang Yue also did not avert her gaze. They looked at each other calmly. Shang Yue's mouth slowly arched into a smile, and her tiny lips looked incredibly sensuous. However, Ye Chong was obviously unaffected, his expression unchanged since he first set eyes on Shang Yue.

Ye Chong felt that the staring was getting pointless, and looking at the other party's expression, she did not seem likely to back down first. He decided to initiate the conversation. "Why are you here?"

Shang Yue swept her fringe lightly to the side. She knew that it was better to be straightforward with a person like him. "I'd like to know what you feel about my younger sister!"

"Your younger sister?" Ye Chong looked at the woman before him in bafflement.

"Yes! The one you danced with last night!" Shang Yue's eyes shone with determination.

"What I feel?" Ye Chong confusion did not subside.

"Yes! What you feel!" Shang Yue repeated.

"Why should I answer that?" Ye Chong looked coldly at the woman. The unexpected question made him wary.

Shang Yue found herself speechless. While her expression was still calm, Ye Chong could still see from the way she swept her fringe that she was a little startled. This further convinced him that the other party was up to no good. However, he could not understand how it was related to his dancing with the girl last night.

Could it be because he danced with her? It could not be, she had initiated the dance.

Or could it be because he licked her? That was not very plausible either. Ye Chong remembered that the girl's neck was completely undamaged! This was too strange!

Ye Chong was not aware of the severity of things.

Ye Chong's rudeness offended Shang Yue, but her smile only grew sweeter. The mole above her brow looked enticing, and her exquisite profile was suddenly looking very attractive! Her eyes sparkled alluringly like stars through a mist.

Shang Yue stepped closer.

Ye Chong looked coldly at Shang Yue, waiting for her next move.

Shang Yue closed in on Ye Chong, looking up at him with bewitching eyes and spoke demurely, "Mr Wang, why don't you tell me! I really want to know!" Her voice was soft and husky.

Shang Yue had never failed with this method. With her usual decorous demeanor, her transformation in character always managed to bewitch her targets. Shang Yue was intelligent, and rarely encountered situations that she could not overcome; she had only used this method twice so far.

When she saw Wang Xing at the door, she knew instantly that he would not be easy to handle. She opted for a straightforward approach, since she believed that she would quickly be ushered out otherwise. The other party was obviously not a patient man!

She did not expect him to face ignorance! That was what infuriated her.

With this method, she could still continue pursuing the question while checking if the man was susceptible to such approaches.

She was not without preparation. On her left wrist was an emergency beeper. Once she pressed on its button, the guards outside would come to her. After all, she was not inclined to be taken advantage of!

Their faces nearly touched, and Shang Yue's breath kissed on Ye Chong's face.

Her snow white skin and red lips were accentuated by a faint fragrant scent and that enticing little mole!

Ye Chong suddenly felt his chest burn inside, like something was stoked to life within.

Shang Yue's vaguely parting lips were beckoning to him!

Without realizing it, Ye Chong moved forward and kissed!

Shang Yue was shocked! She did not expect him to really make a move! She suddenly felt a strong sense of abhorrence for him. To think that he was actually such a lewd person!

While she was shocked, she still maintained some composure. Her right hand reached towards her left wrist. Once she activated her beeper, she would be safe!

However, even in a daze, Ye Chong's body still reacted quickly. He grabbed onto Shang Yue's hands, his right hand quickly searching and obtaining the beeper. Ye Chong threw the item without looking towards the bed! The bedding was soft as feathers,

and the emergency beeper sank into it!

He was still kissing her!

Wang Xing's hands grabbed hold of her like steel roots, and Shang Yue could not escape!

With the tightly closed door and excellent soundproofing, she could not be heard even if she screamed with all she had!

"I'm done for!" That was Shang Yue's last thoughts!

Chapter 183: Undercurrent V

This was Ye Chong's second time in two days experiencing this chaotic sense of losing control! Last night he had licked the girl, and he could not understand why he had done that! It was like his body was moving on its own!

Ye Chong was heavily influenced by Mu, preferring to have everything under his control, especially himself!

Shang may have said that this was a natural response, but Ye Chong still could not let it go. Even if it was a natural response, he should still be able to overcome it, much like he did with negative emotions such as fear.

Last night's state of mind made him feel like he lost control of himself, and that was unacceptable! Besides, he did not feel that that state would be beneficial to him, since it was obvious that his senses and response time were significantly impeded in that state! That was dangerous!

He stared at the moist, red lips before him, fatally alluring! Shang Yue's face was as flawless as a jade sculpture, blushing lightly in a blossom pink. Her chest rose and fell rapidly with her breathing. Their faces were only centimeters apart, and Ye Chong could even feel the heat emanating from her face, and that mysterious fragrant scent!

A voice in his head urged him, "Kiss her! Kiss her!"

Ye Chong suddenly felt his mouth dried up. The moist red lips looked like an irrefutable invitation!

"No! I cannot give in like that!" The thought flashed past Ye Chong's mind!

"Humph!" Ye Chong humphed coldly, his hands moved quicker than he could think, releasing the woman's hands and pushed her at the waist!

"Ah!" Shang Yue gasped in fright as she was thrown precisely on the bed like a sandbag!

Ye Chong's eyes were now crystal clear, but cold as ice!

Ye Chong was dejected inside, knowing that if he did not push the other party away, he would not be able to escape that state of mind! Ye Chong wished that he could suppress this natural response, like he did with fear. If anything frightening happened before him, he could still brave the fear and deal with the situation. This encounter, however, made him felt like he was avoiding the situation! Nonetheless, he still lacked the knowledge about this natural response!

Ye Chong was not inflexible though, and he did what he could to handle the current situation!

Noticing Ye Chong's emotional imbalance, Mu console, "Ye, looks like you need to pick up some physiology!"

"Looks like it!" Ye Chong spoke with a wry smile. Ye Chong found that he was too susceptible to this form of seduction. If the enemy used this weapon against him, he would probably fall for it!

"That's right, it's only a weapon!" Ye Chong brightened up, and began to calm down!

While the down bedding was soft, Shang Yue still fell without anticipation into a confused heap. However, she immediately realized that it was a bed, and her expression twisted as her pulse raced. "Could he be thinking of ..." Shang Yue's expression became unreadable!

She began to feel regret. To think that she fell prey to her own devices! All her past successes had made her too arrogant! She was the real fool!

Shang Yue mourned inside, but recovered her usual easy composure after the initial fright!

Suddenly, Shang Yue noticed her emergency beeper just a small

distance away from her on the bed!

Abruptly, Shang Yue felt her heart race again. Shang Yue repeatedly warned herself to stay calm! She must wait for the right time! This was her only chance of escape!

Shang Yue did not move, for fear of attracting unwanted attention from the other party. Wang Xing was now not only a lecherous person to her, but also a daring man! Did he not think of the consequences of his actions? Shang Yue had decided that if Wang Xing did anything improper to her, she would make him suffer!

She peeked at Wang Xing, but the diabolic guy was bowing his head as if in deep thought.

Shang Yue was overjoyed, but she still acted carefully, only barely moving herself towards the beeper. Wang Xing was still in thinking posture, and that made Shang Yue curious. From their earlier struggle, Wang Xing seemed to be a hasty person, why would he act so restrained now?

Was he finally beginning to feel afraid?

Shang Yue grew even more disdainful of Wang Xing. She had thought that he was a calm and talented person, but found him to be a terribly impulsive man! This was his true face!

However, Shang Yue also believed that as long as she could reach for the emergency beeper, she would be safe! "Hmph, I'll show him then!" she thought.

Seeing Wang Xing ignoring her, Shang Yue was secretly pleased, and reached slowly for the emergency beeper close by! She dared not move too abruptly, for fear of inviting Wang Xing's attention.

It's close! Getting closer!

Shang Yue exhaled in relief as her fingers touched the emergency beeper's wristlet, her fingertips feeling the soft quality of the wristlet!

Just when she thought the situation was finally under her control, her fingers suddenly spasmed! This was immediately followed by a thumping sound from her right.

Feathers flew up in an instant, falling back down like snow. Amongst the feathers, Shang Yue's confused expression showed that she did not realize what had happened!

Her first reaction was to look towards Wang Xing, but there she found Wang Xing staring coldly at her with clear and chilling eyes. Shang Yue could not help but shudder!

When she finally came to her senses, she immediately reached out with fingers to search, but could find nothing but feathers from the bedding, her emergency beeper gone without a trace! A crimson droplet gathered into shape on her thin finger and dyed the white feathers red.

Shang Yue panicked, her face no longer composed, and quickly looked to her right.

A dagger went through the wristlet of her emergency beeper and held it firmly on the wall! The beeper dangled mid-air, but Shang Yue's heart had reached the depths of despair!

Shang Yue felt an extreme sense of dread, and her face paled!

"I think, it's better to speak like this!" Shang Yue lifted her head to his plain voice. Wang Xing was still standing where he was without moving, but his stare had turned colder!

Shang Yue could feel Wang Xing's stare piercing through her like the edge of a blade!

However, cunning as she was, she sensed hope in the situation! She waited. Now that all her cards were on the table, it was the other party's turn to make his move!

As expected, Wang Xing did not disappoint as he spoke plainly, "Let's talk about why you're here!" His tone allowed no disobedience. Shang Yue had also used that same tone before when

she ordered her servants around!

She understood her situation, however, and replied crisply, "I'm here to find out what you feel about my younger sister!"

"Your younger sister?"

"Yes, my younger sister!" Shang Yue did not back down from her intention.

"Why?" Ye Chong's voice was as plain as water.

Shang Yue briefly described Shang Lan's situation.

Ye Chong may not be worldly, but he was sharp enough to understand the other party's intentions!

"Are you all trying to keep me here?" Ye Chong asked calmly.

While she did not feel comfortable about it, Shang Yue braced herself and said, "Mr Wang, why don't you stay with the Shang family for a while? We'll do anything we can for you! I've heard that you have business at planet Windstar. The Shang family has some influence in that planet. If Mr Wang would allow, the Shang family would do our best to assist you in your business!" Shang Yue tried her best to make herself sound tactful.

"Oh, is that right?" Ye Chong swept an indifferent glance at Shang Yue.

Shang Yue braced herself. She sensed arrogance and a certain chilling effect from Wang Xing's tone!

She understood now that this Wang Xing before her was no aristocrat, but more likely, an assassin! His strong murderous aura made Shang Yue shudder inside! Besides, she could sense that the other party was not intimidated by her or the Shang family. Could he have someone else backing him?

However, was he really more powerful than the Shang family? Of course, the thought only barely registered. She knew more than anyone of the Shang family's true power! It was much more than

what could be seen from the surface!

She thought that Wang Xing would be infuriated, but instead, Wang Xing merely humped coldly and spoke casually, "Whatever!" With that, he opened the door and left the room!

Shang Yue was left alone on the bed in a daze! What did Wang Xing mean by "whatever"? It was all too confusing!

Ye Chong wanted to leave the Shang family there and then. With the exception of Robert's four bodyguards, he believed that no one could stop him! However, once Mu informed him of the sheer number of spies the Shang family had in the area, Ye Chong immediately dismissed his plan.

While it was not a certainty yet that the other party could keep him here, his abrupt leaving would definitely lead to an intense battle! Ye Chong had no intentions of attracting attention, but the only mech he dared to use now was Han Jia. If he used Guardian or Overwing, it would probably alert the Sanctuary and the MPA! These two forces were not what Ye Chong could deal with as he was now! Besides, Han Jie had never been tested in actual combat. Ye Chong had no idea how it would perform!

Hence, Mu's suggestion to make his move at night was better! Ye Chong agreed. Han Jia was a full-skeleton mech; with its excellent anti-detection properties and the cover of darkness, leaving the Shang family secretly would not be a difficult task!

Once Ye Chong made up his mind as he wandered around aimlessly in the Shang family's house. When he went back to his room, Shang Yue was already gone!

Wei Yuan sat before his desk with bloodshot eyes. He stared unblinkingly at the holographic recording on the photon processor, the recording of YC that he captured himself! He had not slept for an entire day, but he was feeling unusually excited!

Abruptly, he stood up excitedly, nearly slipping due to

exhaustion! However, that did not dampen his mood!

He finally had a breakthrough studying his recording of YC!

Chapter 184: Shock

Wei Yuan sat before his desk, staring unblinkingly at the holographic recording on the photon processor with bloodshot eyes. This was the recording he made of YC! He had not slept an entire day, but he was still feeling very excited!

He stood up abruptly, and nearly fell from exhaustion! However, that did not dim his enthusiasm!

Just now, he finally had a breakthrough studying his recording of YC!

Wei Yuan had natural talent in this field, often gaining unique insights from the mech trajectories he had seen. This helped him immensely with his understanding of piloting techniques. Even so, his innate talent did not seem to help much this time. This made him feel very impatient and exasperated!

Fortunately, he realized that those emotions did not help. Soon, he vanquished those emotions and went to work!

YC's holographic recording was like an epic teaching material for mech piloting!

That inhumanly difficult straight line step backwards, for example, was executed expertly. Whenever the mech stepped backwards, Tissot would bend its upper body forward at a large angle like a bent spring, greatly reducing the burden due to the abrupt change in direction to be manageable for the mech pilot. However, Wei Yuan's calculations revealed that the resultant momentum still placed a heavy burden on the pilot. Without a strong body, one cannot use this technique!

This was not difficult to realize for Wei Yuan. What bothered him the most was why YC did not preferentially use straight line steps, but opted for curved steps instead! Over the past 24 hours, he pondered on the question. Finally, his efforts were rewarded,

and he finally understood!

From the beginning, Wei Yuan had made a mistake. He had chosen only YC's footwork for analysis, and did not realize that YC's steps were all made to coordinate his combat moves.

When Wei Yuan saw YC using curved steps to match his striking attack from a difficult angle, Wei Yuan finally understood! YC had sacrificed the distance in his steps for the movements of his upper body arms!

He grew more and more obsessed with the recording!

Soon, he began to develop a strong interest in this peculiar way of combat. With his solid mech piloting background, the battle moves he was learning now could not compare with YC's way of fighting in terms of unleashing his full potential.

With his full attention on the holographic recording, Wei Yuan did not realize the extent in which the recording had changed him!

Night came, but Ye Chong received bad news. Mu had discreetly hacked in the Shang family's systems, and was aware of their every movement. From Mu's analysis, it seemed that the Shang family was about to do something with Ye Chong! For some reason, the Shang family did not send out their orders through the usual communication systems, and so Mu did not know the details. However, Ye Chong believed that the Shang family was definitely up to no good!

Ye Chong was not afraid of the Shang family; he was more vigilant against the four Black Coe bodyguards around Robert. As long as they did not interfere, he should have no problems. This was his initial thought, but what happened later proved just how wrong he was!

Ye Chong quickly deployed Han Jia. It was the only mech he could use for now. He did not let Mu out just yet. In truth, Mu would only make his move if Ye Chong was in a desperate

situation.

Fortunately, Mu was not against helping in other matters. Ye Chong received the scanning results from Mu through Han Jia's photon processor!

A dense network of red dots appeared around him, and Ye Chong took a deep breath! Really now, he was just one person! Besides, Ye Chong noticed that no one else was around, and even Robert and his group were all gone. He was the only person around in a 100-meter radius!

The mechs laying in ambush around almost made Ye Chong thought that someone else was coming! The squads of mechs patrolling above in the air drew intertwining lines of trajectories! The entire area was lit up bright as day with high intensity plasma lights that not even a mosquito could escape attention!

The Shang family was fast! Ye Chong realized that he had underestimated the Shang family! It was shocking to find that they could arrange something like this without any warning!

It seemed that a battle was inevitable! Ye Chong's eyes grew colder as he gave a soft pat on the arm rest inside Han Jia's pilot cabin!

Shang Yue watched the white-lit area with a complicated expression. This was the best vantage point, allowing her to see everything clearly. She was thinking about what Wang Xing meant by "whatever", when she suddenly had a hunch that Wang Xing was leaving. His last word was spoken with great confidence, showing his lack of fear towards the Shang family.

She reported her suspicions to her father, but kept what happened to her in Wang Xing's room a secret! All of the Shang family were infuriated. To think that the guy wanted to leave, just when Lan'er seemed to be harbouring feelings for him. For the Shang family, as long as there was a nonzero possibility of Lan'er liking him, they would not let Wang Xing leave! Wang Xing's

feelings were not an issue for them. "He must stay, even if only as a plaything for Lan'er," Shang Zhangming had said. The head of the family even discussed the issue at length with Robert.

The entire setup was planned by Shang Yue alone! The Shang family was surprised at her large scale preparation. After all, he was only one person, how strong could he be? Fortunately, the Shang family had always trusted Shang Yue, and agreed to her plan!

As for Shang Yue, she still acted very carefully even though she did not know who had Wang Xing's back. Her eyebrows knitted lightly, her expression unreadable in the darkness. Only her mutterings could be heard, "You can't win, just back down!"

Robert was also looking towards that area with a quiet sigh, his four bodyguards standing like statues behind him! Beside Robert, Bai Linan's expression twisted horribly. He bit down on his lower lip until it bled! He was forced by Robert to come here. Even as he wanted to warn Ye Chong, Robert's presence did not allow it!

"Sigh, he's a real talent, it's just too bad ..." Robert sighed again.

Ye Chong closed his eyes and placed his hands gently on the controls. His chest rose and fell quickly like a wind box as he breathed deeply. After a while, his chest's movements began to steady, and Ye Chong's eyes opened abruptly! His eyes scanned calmly around him!

It was as though Ye Chong was back on the trash planet, fighting for his life. The hunting game was a familiar one to him, only this time, he was the hunted!

He had entered into battle mode, feeling calm but a little excited! This was the perfect state of mind to be for battle!

The enemy may look like an insurmountable force, but that did not mean it was hopeless for him. Ye Chong realized that the other party was only trying to intimidate. They did not know of Mu, and

would not know that Han Jia was a full-skeleton mech. Besides, this small battle range was the best kind for Ye Chong, and most suitable for a close range mech like Han Jia! How could Ye Chong not stand a chance?

Ye Chong did not like the Shang family. With the exception of the girl he danced with, he detested the others! That girl's elder sister in particular made him wary. Ye Chong suspected that this plan by the Shang family was most likely due to her!

He will not make it easy for them!

Han Jia stood valiantly like a giant clad in silver armor! Ye Chong regretted painting Han Jia with this shiny silver coating, as it was simply too glaring under the illumination!

Ye Chong exhaled softly and made his move! Han Jia burst forward like a cannonball!

The Shang family did not expect Ye Chong to actually try to escape. To them, only someone crazy would do this! If he was planning to attack them as he escaped, that would be even crazier!

The orderly formation around him plunged into chaos in an instant!

Han Jia was a full-skeleton mech, with astonishing speed. If it could break through the formation, chasing after it would not be an easy task!

Looking at the scene, Shang Yue paled instantly! Even Robert and Bai Linan froze in stupefaction!

Ye Chong sneaked up on one of the mechs with its back facing him. This was a Kamenrache, an advanced level mech, one that he knew quite well. Han Jia moved like the wind. The others did not receive any warning signal, oblivious to the ambush!

What happened next was enough to chill any witnesses' heart to the core – the mech was obliterated into pieces! Fragments and parts of the mech flew outwards in all directions, and at the center,

a horrifying shriek came from a bloody mass of flesh! The black canine-tooth dagger held in Han Jia's glimmering silver hand was like a sinister omen! The sharpness of the weapon surprised Ye Chong as well. It was truly the perfect weapon for assassination!

Chunks of flesh and blood stuck to the mech fragments flying outwards. The mech pilot stood no chance!

Ye Chong had stirred the hornet's nest!

The communication channels were flooded with confusion. Everyone was looking on their photon processor for signs of the enemy!

How was this possible? The mech pilots of the Shang family were flabbergasted! If they could not pinpoint the enemy's whereabouts, how could they continue fighting? Fear began to spread within their hearts!

"Do it manually!" Someone shouted in the comms, and the mech pilots gathered themselves. Yes, they were many, and the enemy but one, there was nothing to be afraid of! The thought of their overwhelming fear earlier made them feel embarrassed, but this feeling quickly turned to anger. It was all the damn mech's fault! Everyone charged towards the mech!

Han Jia stood out like a sore thumb under the lighting, and they could find him easily!

Just when they were about to fire, however, they realized that it was easy to hit one of their own. The thought made them hesitated!

There were only three of them before him! If he finished off these three, there would be no one else to stop him! This was his and Mu's calculation results. This direction seemed heavily defended, but was in reality the weakest part of the formation. There was a route about four meters wide for him to escape in front. Besides, the territory beyond this point was the most complicated, and

most suitable for his escape!

However, he must first deal with the three mechs standing in the way. The faster he could achieve this, the better his chances were to escape!

Ye Chong could now feel the difference between Mu and Shang in their strategizing! Mu looked for weaknesses in the enemy through meticulous calculations, while Shang preferred to play with psychology. They were both effective measures!

Ye Chong ambushed the mech to create confusion, and so he chose the most terrifying method of wrecking the mech into pieces! Anyone would be severely affected by the sight of a mech being disembodied like that. If the mech pilot was a comrade, the effect would be even deeper!

Ye Chong's strategy worked. Almost all the mechs were riled up!

Ye Chong kept his calm. He found that his meditation training had helped with his mental calmness. No wonder the Sanctuary's mech pilots rarely made mistakes! It seemed that meditation was really useful!

Han Jia had no intention of evading the fragments from the mech. The silver glittering mech charged onwards through the fragments like a brave warrior! With its speed, battling with the mechs in front was inevitable! The enemy mechs readied themselves. They would have shot him if not for the fear of shooting one of their own!

Most of the mechs instinctively charged towards the silver mech! With the mech's speed, it was nearly impossible to change its direction. Besides, the mech was almost surrounded in all directions!

Just when everyone thought that the mech could not escape, a most shocking turn of events occurred!

The silver mech bent forward like spring and moved backwards

in a logic defying step! This surreal move was enough to make everyone freeze in shock!

If Wei Yuan were to witness this scene, he would definitely leap in excitement - it was exactly the same as YC's straight line retreat in his recording!

Ye Chong was now moving towards the narrow area! He was delighted to find that the situation was better than he expected - of the three mechs situated at the area, two of them were heading towards him now, leaving only one behind! It seemed that he succeeded in moving those two to action too!

Han Jia's sudden change in direction surprised the two mechs! Ye Chong's eyes gleamed coldly, his hands now moving faster than before, looking like a shroud above the controls!

Everyone at the scene could never forget what they saw - the silver mech was charging straight ahead when it suddenly retreated backwards in a straight line, a movement that seemed to defy the laws of physics. The silver armor of the mech shone eerily - Han Jia was not quite done yet. Two mechs charged towards it at the front lines, and the silver mech swept past them like a shadow. Before anyone could understand what happened, the two mechs lost control and continued moving forward, carrying their momentum. Before they covered 10 meters, a huge explosion was heard, and two dazzling fireballs burned under the intense plasma illumination!

Ye Chong had stepped in an S shape, but the hardest part was when he attacked! The two mechs were very close to each other, and even with Ye Chong's hand speed, maneuvering Han Jia to attack twice in a row had pushed him to his limit! Fortunately, his two daggers were sharp, or those two attacks would have injured him as well!

His extraordinary piloting skills and battle moves had shocked everyone at the scene, and even Robert's four bodyguards had

their emotions written on their faces!

Only one mech left!

Ye Chong looked coldly at the mech before him. This was a model he had never seen before, but it did not affect Ye Chong's confidence! No matter what mech it was, he had to finish it off, or he would never be able to escape!

Han Jia moved so quickly that Ye Chong reached the last mech in the blink of an eye. His attack on the two mechs earlier had also caused this mech to freeze in shock! It was now in a exposed position!

It was as though Heavens was on Ye Chong's side. The explosion from the two mechs he attacked had created a heat shock wave that pursued Han Jia like a fiery beast, swallowing Han Jia and the last mech both!

Everyone felt their visions blurred as the ground shook. They could see two mechs through the dust, but that shiny, silver mech was nowhere to be seen! When they looked closer, they saw that one of the mechs had bits of silver flecks on it. The sharper minds immediately realized that the silver mech was actually disguised. They could only guess which master had designed such a colorful mech that did not look quite metallic!

Beside Robert, the four bodyguards took on the entire scene, and one of them spoke up despite himself, "A full-skeleton mech!" His surprised voice made even Robert more interested in the mech!

The four bodyguards were extremely startled! However, they were Black Cove elites, and quickly recovered and exchanged glances. One of them vanished, while another two deployed their mechs and slipped into the pilot's cabin, leaving only one of them carefully on guard beside Robert! Robert did not interfere with their actions, his eyes only on Han Jia!

Full-skeleton mechs were famed amongst the Three Forces! They

did their own research into these type of mechs, but none had never successfully made one. Full-skeleton mechs were only a theoretical hypothesis, although each of the Three Forces believed that they could be built! However, it was exceedingly difficult, as shown by the thus far fruitless efforts of the Three Forces!

Full-skeleton mechs were easily recognizable due to their unique building material. This was why these four Black Cove men recognized Han Jia as one in an instant.

"I didn't think this last mech would be so hard to deal with! If I don't hurry up and finish it off, it's going to be too late when other people joined in to stop me!"

Ye Chong grew nervous, and unknowingly began to use the moves that he practiced in the virtual world!

Han Jia began to move differently, the black dagger in its left hand aiming straight at the other party's magnetic sword as its huge body twisted quickly like a spinning top, its right hand with the other dagger reaching for the mech's neck like a poisonous serpent! The other mech's pilot was apparently competent as well. Even though it was now in a passive position, the mech was determined, and shielded its neck with the shield on its left hand!

Ding! A clear ringing sound reverberated outwards!

Ye Chong rode on the momentum and spinned even faster, its left arm bent to slice the enemy with the sharp edges of its shield. It was a vicious attack - a direct hit would lead to severe consequences!

The mech pilot also moved decisively. The mech inclined its body and received the blow from Han Jia with its left shoulder!

A sharp metallic slicing sound was heard, and Han Jia's shield, made of iron lizard scales, amputated the mech's left arm, exposing the network of photon circuits within!

Just when the mech pilot thought that it had escaped death, he

saw four tentacle-like things coming towards him fast as lightning, the sharp ends of the tentacles chilled him to the bone! The maneuver just now had pushed him to his limits, and his fingers now spasmed in protest!

Was he going to die here? He watched as the sharp tips grew larger and larger in sight, and he closed his eyes out of instinct. He held his breath, awaiting that final moment with a bleak heart!

A few seconds passed, but nothing happened. He opened his eyes in surprise, but saw that the other party was now fleeing ahead, slowly fading out of view! He did not understand this last act of mercy!

Did he not enjoy killing? The thought was preposterous - three of their own had died horribly!

He could not figure it out!

Ye Chong was about to kill the other party with his four thousand-segment-worm whips. This stubborn opponent was the enemy, so mercy was not necessary. Reducing the enemy's forces was definitely advantageous for him - this was a principle of Ye Chong! However, it was not meant to be. Just when the sharp ends of the thousand-segment worms were about to reach the mech, Ye Chong heard Mu yelling, "Ye, run, the Black Cove people are moving!"

Robert's four bodyguards were Ye Chong's largest concern. Now that Mu said they were making their move, Ye Chong ran without looking back! If they caught on to him, he would definitely be delayed; once the other mech pilots recovered and joined in, even with Mu, he would be finished!

The four thousand-segment-worm whips returned to their concealed shooting chambers like four venomous snakes!

Ye Chong ran! He peeked backwards, and as expected, he saw two of Black Cove's Cosmic Flares in pursuit. Ye Chong's chest

tightened, and ramped up Han Jia's speed forward! If it was a usual encounter, Ye Chong would not be afraid of two Cosmic Lares. However, under the circumstances, even if there was only one of them, Ye Chong could not afford the delay in engaging it!

Han Jia and the Cosmic Flares were quick, vanishing in an instant. Just then, the Shang family's mech pilots broke out of their trance and took to the air, following the three mechs!

As for the mech pilot who barely escaped from Ye Chong, he slipped out of his mech, revealing himself to the usually courteous and gentle Shang Ling! His face was now drained of blood!

Shang Zhangming was enraged! Even with so many of them as part of this setup, his single target had managed to escape, leaving three of his own dead. If not for Robert's bodyguards, his son would have died! Robert and his men had seen everything, and this incident had proven to be a humiliation to the Shang family! Shang Zhangming was infuriated by the thought! Most importantly, if their deplorable performance this time made an ally like Robert lose faith in the Shang family, it would be a double tragedy!

Shang Zhangming could not help a rising sense of regret! Unfortunately, there was never a cure for regret!

In the darkness, Shang Yue's expression was unreadable. It looked like one of joy, or anger, and but her tiny mole looked even more bewitching!

Ye Chong dared not break his concentration, focusing only on flying!

Han Jia was a lot faster than Cosmic Flare, and the complicated territory was very advantageous to Ye Chong due to his many experiences of escaping!

The two Black Cove mechs in pursuit were obviously new to task of chasing after a target. More importantly, they could not lock on

Han Jia! Cosmic Flare's holographic scanning system was useless against full-skeleton mechs!

Soon, they lost sight of Han Jia. The search around the area turned out fruitless, and they returned resentfully!

Ye Chong finally relaxed a little. While the thought of dealing with these two mechs had occurred to him repeatedly along the way, he had to quickly dispose of them for fear of the other mechs catching up to him. He would then be in a vulnerable position!

The two Black Cove mech pilots had no idea that they had narrowly escaped death!

Ye Chong could not rest now. He must quickly leave Richie. He had witnessed the Shang family's influence on Richie when he first arrived!

The Shang family had kept Ye Chong's connection to the virtual world in his room alive to avoid alerting him. They never imagined that this was an opportunity for Ye Chong to leave Richie.

Mu hacked the docking zone's system through the virtual world and took over a starship with no one onboard. It was now docked behind a hill not far ahead! All Ye Chong had to do now was to reach that starship and head for planet Windstar!

With its location marked, Ye Chong quickly found the starship. This was a medium sized starship with complete facilities. It was also sufficiently fuelled to complete a few round trips to and from Windstar.

Once inside the starship, Mu took charge of the flying, and Ye Chong could finally fully relax!

Ye Chong slipped out of Han Jia, and before he could steady himself, the starship was airborne.

Less than five minutes after Ye Chong's starship left Richie, all starships were banned from leaving the docking zone! The Shang family did not expect Ye Chong to be able to leave Richie so quickly

as they organized their men for a wide scale search.

"F-58, how I'd like to meet with you!" A middle-aged man murmured behind a mask, looking at the holographic image on his desk. It was an image of Ye Chong.

Ye Chong's holographic image and news of his full-skeleton mech had soon reached Black Cove. With Instructor Hak's confirmation, it was determined that Wang Xing was F-58 that Black Cove was searching for. Intel also revealed that Wang Xing's destination was Windstar, and so, a large squad of Black Cove mech pilots were ordered to head towards that planet. Their orders were to capture F-58 alive at all costs, and bring him back to Black Cove!

Of course, Ye Chong was unaware of any of this. He was now on his way to Windstar. He was the only person on the starship. They met with many starships along the way, and Mu had played the part of a trading ship from Richie to perfection. No one would have imagined that the massive starship had only one passenger onboard!

When Ye Chong saw Han Jia's exterior, he finally understood why the Black Cove people made their move too! The heat from the explosion that came from the two mechs he attacked had melted the layer of silver paint on Han Jia. The shock wave that followed brushed off the paint from Han Jia, leaving only flecks of silver on it, the only evidence of its initial layer of paint!

Full-skeleton mechs were made of unique materials, and Ye Chong had used the best skeletons he could find to build Han Jia. It was no wonder that the four Black Cove mech pilots recognized it immediately. After all, full-skeleton mechs were what mech pilots had always dreamed for!

Chapter 185: September

There was a dojo called September on Windstar. From the outside, the buildings and walls looked aged, and its old-style architecture made it look like some tourist attraction or historical heritage. There was the occasional person entering or leaving the building, bringing life to the place. However, one could still feel the declined state of the dojo, like an aging beauty of old!

A young, thin man was standing before this dojo, looking upwards to the calligraphic dance of the words "September" on the building. This youth was Ye Chong. He understood the words, but he could not possibly gauge whether the name was a good one.

"Ye, this is the September Dojo!" Mu said.

"Hmm, it looks abandoned! Not many people go in and out of the place, must be a quiet dojo, just like what our information said." Ye Chong said as he looked towards the main entrance of the September dojo.

"According to the virtual net, this dojo's master refused to incorporate new elements such as the now popular mech battles. It was criticized by young people, saying it is too conservative, and could not keep up with the times. That's probably why the number of dojo's apprentices have decreased sharply!" Mu always did his investigations thoroughly.

"I see." Ye Chong seemed to realize something from this.

"Hmm, this dojo does not interact with the outside world very much, and the dojo master is very close to the local governor, always under the care of the local authorities! Hence, I believe this is a good place to take cover!"

This was the result of a discussion between Ye Chong and Mu. Ever since Ye Chong realized that Black Cove had seen Han Jia, he knew that they would not let him go easily. Besides, he had told

Robert that he was heading to Windstar with the four bodyguards present. If they could not find him on Richie, they would continue their search on Windstar.

The safest way forward now would be to leave Windstar for now and wait for the heat to die down before coming back. Ye Chong knew he stood no chance against Black Cove in a direct encounter. However, Ye Chong did not want to leave Windstar. The illness he had was the only thing restraining him now; only by eliminating this problem could he feel safe! Even though the episodes were getting minor, Ye Chong dared to be careless. Dying from this illness would be such a shame!

Ye Chong decided to wait for Wang Weixing to return to Windstar. Who knew when the doctor would be on the planet again? After some consideration, Ye Chong decided on the matter. As long as he hid at a suitable location and moved with care, Ye Chong was confident of evading Black Cove for at least the next two months. The next problem was finding such a place for him to lay low. The September dojo was the hiding location that Ye Chong and Mu decided on in the end.

"You want to learn combat skills from me?" Lan Yixing looked at the frail young man before him, feeling a little disappointed. From his physique, this young man did not seem suitable for combat. However, he did not want to reject him, as it had been long since anyone had asked to be admitted as an apprentice!

"Yes!" Ye Chong replied calmly.

"As an apprentice, the first year will be spent on menial tasks like scrubbing the floor, it's hard work. This is to train the apprentice's mental fortitude! All of these tasks must be done by hand, and not with any cleaning machines! You must do this for one year!" Lan Yixing reminded him. "It's not too late to back out now!" Many apprentice wannabes backed off after this. With their current technology, cleaning tasks were all delegated to smart cleaning machines. Who would want to do the cleaning themselves?

Besides, it was a full year of performing these menial tasks. The thought was daunting enough.

"Okay!" The young man answered crisply without hesitation. Temporary apprentices need not perform these tasks, since they were only here for short term training, and mostly for fun. Apprentices were different, and were the dojo's true students. They were the ones who would learn the most! However, it was not easy to become one. An apprentice must go through one year or more of training and be approved by their masters before receiving actual classes.

Lan Yixing looked at the few temporary apprentices in the dojo, their dwindling numbers casting a gloomy mood over him. It was an undeniable truth that combat expertise was declining! He was deeply worried about passing down his skills. If this expertise was to be lost in history in his generation, he would never forgive himself.

"Alright! Let's have you try it out first!" Lan Yixing said. He liked the down-to-earth feeling emanating from the young man before him. The only regret was his build. It seemed to him that the young man lacked the strength and stamina to reach the peak of this field.

A thought occurred to him, and Lan Yixing asked, "What's your name?"

"Mo Fei." Ye Chong answered succinctly.

That was how Ye Chong landed himself a place in the September dojo. He chose to be an apprentice and not a temporary one, mostly because apprentices must stay at the dojo. For Ye Chong, a suitable place to stay was key to avoiding detection. After all, he needed to stay here until Wang Weixing returned. Fortunately, Black Cove was not aware of his goal, or Wang Weixing would probably be captured and brought to Black Cove. In that case, his situation would be hopeless.

Ye Chong obtained an identity card once he reached Windstar. Information in the card on his identity was modified by Mu. While Ye Chong looked very similar to his image on the identity card, Mu had actually did some minor modifications on 13 important but inconspicuous parts. These modifications were small, but the effect was apparent. Even if another party had Ye Chong's holographic image and access to the local population's information database, they would not be able to find Ye Chong through an automatic query. Besides, Wang Xing's identity information was left untouched by Mu.

No one would have guessed that Ye Chong could change his identity whenever he wanted!

If he could survive these two months, he would be able to meet Wang Weixing. That was Ye Chong's only objective!

Lan Yixing was extremely satisfied with his new apprentice, Mo Fei. He worked hard with a serious attitude and never lazed around, unlike his other senior brothers who would leave whenever they were free. In fact, Lan Yixing had never seen him leave the dojo. He usually spent his time in his room when unoccupied, and did not seem to be indulging in any negative activities. With the exception of his overly cold demeanor, Lan Yixing had no qualms with his new student.

Lan Yixing's knew that his other apprentices were no longer interested in combat skills, and he was helpless against this. Everyone knew that combat experts had no bright future, and he could only be thankful that they were still here with him! There was a time when potential apprentices came in hoards, which filled him with hope, thinking that combat experts were finally gathering interest again. Later, he realized that these people were only here because of mech combat. The realization was dispiriting. Apart from that, he found that most of the apprentices had no foundation in the area, even though they all wanted to shortcut their way to success, wanting to learn some cool looking but

impractical moves. He was vexed. After much thought, he decided to ignore mech battle techniques, which caused most of his temporary apprentices to leave. Fortunately, he had enough savings to avoid financial difficulty.

Mo Fei was an inconspicuous character in the September dojo. He was always quiet, his cold stare giving off an unapproachable feeling. Besides, he never took the initiative to greet anyone, so none of them really noticed him. Nonetheless, they were pleased to see the silent fellow taking care of all the menial chores, relieving their burdens.

Ye Chong did not mind it. To him, this was only a temporary accommodation. Once his business was finished here, he would be free to go wherever he wanted. Besides, these menial tasks were nothing for someone like him, who grew up on a trash planet. He enjoyed this seemingly dull lifestyle, which offered him plenty of free time every day to learn whatever he was interested in.

The only regret was that the dojo had no virtual world access.

Wei Yuan waited every day, alone, in the NR Training Center, hoping to YC gain, but to no avail. YC never visited again. He was disappointed, and regretted being too absorbed watching his recordings that he did not realize YC had left.

The holographic recording was good teaching material, especially for people who could pick up things quickly. Besides, YC's holographic recording had given him a direction to focus on, and with that basic training!

Wei Yuan panted heavily. While panting was impossible in the virtual world, the strain from his training still made him pant instinctively. He had improved, but was still a long way behind YC! He had used his photon processor to calculate the parameters of YC's performance, and found them to be quite shocking numbers!

Wei Yuan did not give up then. As long as he worked hard, he would surely reach these new heights one day.

"Mo Fei!" Lan Yixing called Ye Chong, who was just done with mopping the floor. It was already nighttime, and most of the temporary apprentices had gone home, leaving only Ye Chong in the massive building!

Ye Chong stopped in his tracks and turned back to face Lan Yixing, waiting for his next words.

Lan Yixing knew that Mo Fei disliked talking, and so he continued, "Hmm, I've been watching you all this time. Usually apprentices need to perform these menial tasks for a full year before qualifying for instructions, but since you've done well in this period, I'll make an exception and teach you some basic moves!"

"Okay." Ye Chong replied. Ye Chong had never seen Lan Yixing perform any moves himself. Usually, it was a few of his so called senior brothers who did the teaching in the dojo. These senior brothers seemed to only have the looks but not the substance. If they met with a slightly capable opponent, they would definitely be defeated.

Lan Yixing spoke lowly, "Look carefully!" Just as he finished, Lan Yixing moved into position and began to perform his moves, one by one!

Ye Chong watched with growing amazement. He had seen many combat experts, and knew some moves himself, so he could tell a person's expertise in an instant. This Lan Yixin was at least as good as the two combat experts he saw on the Nast!

Ye Chong watched with focus and startled to the core. The moves were very similar to many that he saw in the recording of the fight between those two combat experts.

Lan Yixing repeated the moves a few times, and sighed a little inside when he saw Mo Fei's dazed expression. However, he still explained the key points and tricks to each move patiently to Mo Fei. Now, it was up to him to absorb and digest what he was

taught. Lan Yixing did not expect much from him.

Ye Chong benefited greatly from this session. All this time, he did not have anyone to teach him, and could only figure things out himself. Lan Yixing was well learned, and had a solid foundation in combat. He explained each move with simple words that managed to touch the core of the subject, allowing Ye Chong to finally make sense of much of his earlier musings. Aside from that, Ye Chong learned many new techniques that he never thought of before.

Ye Chong's experience in the field was immense, and he had always spent time analyzing combat moves. That was why he gained much from this session.

Lan Yixing repeated his moves three times before finally stopping.

"Alright, now you try them!" Lan Yixing said to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong moved slowly, attempting to mimic what he had just witnessed. However, old habits did not change easily. Despite his newfound understanding of all his combat moves, he still performed each move like he always did, barely replicating Lan Yixing's moves.

Lan Yixing sighed inside, finding Mo Fei to be just as he expected - innately unsuited to the art of combat. The moves he demonstrated earlier were all basic moves, and the simplest ones. Most temporary apprentices could reproduce them to a certain degree after just watching him demonstrate once. Mo Fei, however, had distorted all his moves, even when he had demonstrated three times.

However, Lan Yixing was a responsible teacher. He stopped Ye Chong and pointed out all his mistakes, explaining the details of each one of them.

After that, Lan Yixing advised Ye Chong to practice often before leaving him be. Now, Ye Chong was left all alone in the training

ground.

In the training ground, Ye Chong practiced those basic moves again and again, quickly losing himself in the training.

If Lan Yixing were to see Ye Chong's performance, he would most definitely be stupefied!

Ye Chong moved swiftly, his fists a blur of movement across the air. Ye Chong was a strong fighter, and Lan Yixing's instructions had allowed him to significantly enhance his punching speed and energy. Ye Chong found that his punching moves had reached a new level of speed! This was the first breakthrough for Ye Chong ever since he reached a bottleneck with his hand speed!

Speed was not related only to strength, but also technique!

This set of basic combat moves had now become a seamless combination of both speed and strength in Ye Chong's hands! He now had a better understanding of how these two qualities complemented each other!

Unlike other people, Ye Chong realized that these seemingly basic move were the most effective for killing! He must be proficient with them as soon as possible!

Ye Chong continued on with his training relentlessly. Under the artificial illumination, his shadow flickered into and out of existence due to his quick movements like a dream!

Chapter 186: Brewing Storm I

Rui Bing sat in the starship, looking out from the window to the starry skies, lost in thought! Even here, she sat up with her back straight in her white training garb, her long and dark flowing hair itself a beautiful sight in the starship. With the combination of a combat expert's typical martial bearing and Rui Bing's heavenly beauty, the effect was stunning. She had already dismissed at least seven groups of friendly strangers. Of course, a few of them were quite insistent, and Rui Bing did not hesitate to offer them a little warning!

These men, however, reminded her of a certain someone. A man that was as cold and composed as herself! Where was he right now? As she reminisced, Rui Bing's ice cold expression finally transformed - her lips hooked upwards at the ends and her eyes softened, delivering a heavy blow to all the people who were discreetly watching her! They never realized that this beautiful sight would forever be engraved in their hearts!

They were close to Windstar now. Rui Bing was ready to disembark. She was invited to the planet. Planet Windstar was home to a few dojos, and the master of one of them was close to her father. She would not refuse his invitation to be a referee. Besides, she was curious. She knew that such matches between schools were common, but these events were usually on a very small scale. Even on Blue Ocean, where Rui Bing's dojo was, there were not many dojos around, and the numbers of students were pitiful. Hence, it had been long since such a friendly match event was organized. Moreover, she had never took part in this kind of event since young, and so was understandably curious about it.

On the other hand, ever since her meeting with Ye Chong two years ago, she had not met a match. During her fight with Ye Chong, she had only discovered the tricks to her family's more advanced techniques, and so she was defeated by Ye Chong. Now,

she was no longer her previous self. The fight with Ye Chong had heavily injured her, but it had also pushed her to new heights. After two years of unrelenting training, she had now reached a new level, one that perhaps surpassed even her father's!

She looked forward to seeing the professionals on Windstar, perhaps they would turn out to be a pleasant surprise!

Windstar was a tourist planet. Thus, she was surprised to find so many dojos on the planet! Besides, she heard that there were efforts poured into developing mech battling techniques, something she was interested in. This seemed to attract more apprentices into the local dojos. As for the dojos that did not incorporate this recent trend, they mostly fell into decline.

Most combat experts were conservative to a certain degree, and Rui Bing was no exception. However, she knew that unless the field extended its scope to new areas, the end of combat dojos would be near in sight!

She did not have any huge ambitions like promoting combat expertise to society; she only hoped that her father's dojo would not close down by her own hands!

Perhaps, she could find a way to keep her dojo alive! She mused. However, the thought of Rui Su's worried expressions and her mother when she was leaving brought a warm sensation to her heart.

The ship entered the docking zone shortly after. She stood up and began to gather her things.

She took her luggage to the ship's passenger lounge, and waited for the ship to dock. Suddenly, a pair not too far away caught her attention. They were a man and a woman, both wearing cold expressions. The man had a fierce aura, his body as athletic as a leopard. The woman beside him was tall with a similar build, her muscular body apparent under her tight-fitting outfit.

They were both dressed in black, and the people around them somehow kept their distance from them. This made them both stand out even more. However, what Rui Bing noticed was not that, but the aura they were both emanating. The aura made her uncomfortable. Rui Bing was an experienced combat expert, and was now even more sensitive due to her improved skills. It was not uncommon for her to have these explainable feelings.

Those two seemed to notice Rui Bing's attention on them. The man in black glanced briefly at Rui Bing and ignored her. The woman, however, studied Rui Bing thoroughly, her icy gaze bearing a look of contempt.

Rui Bing did not like it, but kept herself composed. For someone at a level like hers, one was judged not only by skills, but also by one's demeanor.

The ship docked, and the passengers disembarked. However, those two in black stood where they were, right where Rui Bing must pass to leave the ship. Rui Bing lifted her luggage and advanced. When she passed by them, all of a sudden, the woman shot her right elbow outwards!

Rui Bing's eyes chillingly gleamed. Ever since she glimpsed the profound wonders of advanced combat moves two years ago, her six senses had greatly improved to a degree that even she could not fully understand. The sudden attack was no different than a direct frontal attack to her. Rui Bing's naturally hanging left hand responded just as quickly, coming into a bend and greeted the opponent!

Thak! A soft impact was heard. In that instant, their elbows collided. The woman in black gasped softly and stepped backwards. Rui Bing, however, held her position. The man at the side stepped minutely to the right and reached for the woman's waist. The woman landed safely in her partner's embrace.

The encounter was subtle, and was not noticed by anyone

nearby. The woman in black looked surprised, while the man stared coldly at Rui Bing. Rui Bing was undeterred, and stared right back at him. The man suddenly humphed coldly and supported his partner as they left the starship.

Rui Bing kept her features composed, but she was just as surprised inside. Her attack may seem like a careless attack to the other party's elbow, but she had actually aimed for a spot that would numb that other party's hand. However, while she managed to hit the woman's elbow, the woman managed to make her miss her targeted spot. Besides, the woman in black was strong, almost as strong as herself. If she had not used a unique technique to direct internal energy, she would have stepped backwards just like the woman.

What surprised Rui Bing the most was the woman's pure physical strength! Women were generally physically inferior than men, but the woman in black almost made Rui Bing doubt her gender! What power!

When Rui Bing came out of the ship, the two were nowhere in sight. In the docking area, Rui Bing quickly found her welcoming party.

Rui Bing dragged her luggage along to a middle-aged man with a heavily mustached face, wearing a brown jacket. She bowed slightly and greeted, "Uncle Hua!". Uncle Hua was her father's best friend who frequently visited her home, and Rui Bing recognized him instantly!

Uncle Hua spoke joyfully, "Bing'er is all grown up now! Uncle Hua nearly couldn't recognize you! How is your mother?"

"She's doing well!" Rui Bing bowed slightly and replied in return.

Uncle Hua laughed. "Bing'er is still the same as before!" He turned back to his apprentices as said, "This is your senior sister, Rui Bing, please greet her well!"

The apprentices behind him were all surprised to find Senior Sister Rui Bing that their master always lauded to be such a beauty. Their eyes glowed as they greeted in sync, "Senior Sister!" Their loud voices drew the attention of the people nearby.

Rui Bing bowed slightly and returned the greeting. "Junior brothers!" Her voice was as clear as before.

Uncle Hua's dojo was the largest on Windstar, called the Tian Hua dojo. It was full of apprentices due to the dojo's incorporation of mech battle techniques. There was even a mech battleground available. However, since mech battle was not a well developed field, this area was only open to apprentices with higher attainments. The weekly mech battle performances were a popular attraction, more exciting than what one could get from the virtual world. It was well received by the younger people, and many of them had joined the dojo after watching these performances!

Tian Hua dojo had flourished under Uncle Hua's leadership. His apprentices did not disappoint - they were all skilled in combat, most of them could also pilot mechs, becoming Uncle Hua's trusted assistants.

Tian Hua dojo provided ample facilities, and housed many apprentices. When they saw the dojo master accompanying a most beautiful lady into the dojo, followed by some rarely seen senior brothers, they all turned to have a good look. However, with the admonishments from their senior brothers, none of them dared to stop their practice, even when their hearts were no longer in it.

News of the arrival of a beauty in the dojo spread quickly. Soon, all of the apprentices were aware of it.

As for Rui Bing, Uncle Hua treated her warmly, and his apprentices all flattered her. However, Rui Bing's cold expression never changed, like nevermelting ice. While Rui Bing did not express herself much, she still held herself with refinement, and never did anything excessive. This won the approval of the fellow

apprentices.

Ye Chong continued his simple daily routine. Lan Yixing saw him as inherently untalented, but since he was willing to work hard, the apprentice was able to perform newly taught moves well enough the day after Lan Yixing introduced them to him. Hence, Lan Yixing would teach Ye Chong a few moves and techniques every day, and leave him be.

By now, Ye Chong had learned much from his daily instructions. His mistakes done before Lan Yixing were only for cover. Leaving the trash planet behind, he was no longer the naive young man that he was before. He always drew attention no matter what he did, and right now, that was exactly what he was trying to avoid. He could only hope that nothing went wrong until Wang Weixing's return.

As he gained more insights into combat day by day, his mech battle skills had also improved. This was something he did not expect.

Nonetheless, Black Cove's men must have arrived on Windstar by now. Ye Chong looked through the window at the drizzling rain outside, lost in his thoughts!

Chapter 187: Brewing Storm II

"Martial Arts Tournament", written on the invitation Lan Yixing received, of a paper-made traditional design looking all classy and sophisticated, exuding a hint of aroma which was calming to the nerves, though Lan Yixing was not as calm in his mind. He was the first to hear about this tournament, yet he was the last to be invited by the host. One could already imagine the amount of disdain exerted on this late invitation by Hua Tiankai himself. Well, can't help it I guess. Lan Yixing might be an expert but he had rarely demonstrated his strength fighting with others. Basically, not many of the people were aware of his skills, especially after his September Dojo went permanently closed. It would be a miracle for those in the martial arts to remember his name in their mind.

The discomfort remained in his mind, as the pathetic appearance of his September Dojo lingered in his mind along with the glorious imagery of Tian Hua Dojo. He sighed, helplessly. The so-called tournament this time likely would only have the apprentices fighting instead of those masters of the dojo to prove their values. Naturally, the masters or the heads would sit back and watch, they would not put their fists and kicks into the scene. Well, that would be another gloomy news to Lan Yixing with those impotent apprentices of his. Of course he recognized their impotency and he feared it would be a mere embarrassment to have them there. "I'm turning this down." Thought so, Lan Yixing made up his mind that he must reject this offer.

"I'm very sorry," said Lan Yixing as he cupped one hand in the other, that etiquette of his from the ancient fighters was still a thing. "That I have a few personal matters to settle on that day and might not be able to attend the tournament. Brother, I am truly regretful to not be able to join the festival this time around. Please inform Mr. Hua on my behalf to express the admiration towards

his determination as well as my sincerest apology."

Ye Chong was engaged in the important task of wiping the floor clean behind Lan Yixing and his companion.

The person who sent the invitation this time was known as Hua Shangmei, the third apprentice of Hua Tiankai. His feature was demure, handsomely expressive. His nature was docile as respectfully he dealt with the people. A balanced proportion of body, with flexible limbs, both could clearly tell he was a potential material for combat-training. And his fame roared throughout the Windstar in between the few dojos he attended, which was not something to be overlooked of. Lan Yixing took a look at this fine man before him and he thought of his own apprentices... It was discouraging. And when he finally got a good material whose tenacity could withstand tough training, that material turned out to be rather mediocre. Extinguished, his burning passion. So he made up his mind, he would like to decline the offer to the tournament this time.

Hua Shangmei seemed to be not expecting rejection from Lan Yixing. He might have claimed to be occupied by some personal matters, but anyone could tell the mere sense of rejection between the words, especially a talent like Hua Shangmei. Well if the matters were personal to begin with, naturally it would be better for Hua Shangmei to not further question the person.

His tone was a bit grim, "It would be such regret to not have your appearance at our tournament this time. Well, it can't be helped, if Master Lan is preoccupied. However if there were instances where our Tianhua dojo could provide assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. We shall never reject your request!" Sincerity was filled in his expression. It was pleasing to the eyes.

Although it sounded like a work of tongue, Lan Yixing still complimented the person in his mind, he must admit that Hua Tiankai had gotten a great apprentice!

Lan Yixing walked Hua Shangmei to the gate. He seemed troubled the moment he returned. He got back to his room after giving few brief instructions on Ye Chong's training.

Under the light, Ye Chong trained hard as sweat formed like downpour on his body. Under surveillance of Mu Shang, it would be impossible for one to have a peek on his training, which was relieving to Ye Chong as he trained harder.

It was Shang's turn to take over the reception in his head. Fortunately, Ye Chong was the kind who would be extremely focused on his training or Shang's motivational talk could become one of the world's worst torments to mankind ever.

Ye Chong felt inspired ever since he did his training. Everything that had hardly made sense to him before cleared up for him out of sudden. He was naturally an expert in manipulating his muscle. However, with the better understanding towards combats he got from the training daily, his skills grew stronger! Ye Chong wielded the strength of a bull and he had mastered the technique to exert it efficiently, he himself too could not imagine how massive his strength had grown.

With the development in his strength, speed and skillfulness, he felt he had been reborn.

Regarding strength, Ye Chong held his own set of beliefs. The whole point of strength was always about timing. Applying one kind of strength at one kind of time, that was his knowledge about strength. Close-combats might be great, but it was a mere force in front of a mech, a machinery. A pilot could be regarded as mighty, yet the time he took to roll into his cabin was sufficient for a fighter to slaughter him a few times! If they were armed with weaponry like the heat ray guns, that would be even more offensive to make the pilot die a hundred times, although heat ray guns were not the ideal weapon to be armed with, considering its disadvantages like the problem carrying it and the attention it attracted before one even approached the target.

Then there was this part of fighting called "shooting", his nemesis, a headache giving aspect of training. It was not like he was unaware of the efficiency of heat ray guns among the other ranged weapons, it was just ... somehow he was born defected in this. He had tried practicing, the efficiency just would not go up in the end. At least he was fast, so it would still be challenging for one to lock on him with a ray-based gun.

He had overheard the exchange between Lan Yixing and Hua Shangmei, clearly. Despite that, he did not seem to intend to grab the spotlight of the tournament. This place was merely an accommodation for him at the moment. He simply did not compute the necessity in those apparent recognition since they would bring him no good than tons of unwanted inconveniences while alarming the foes. Hiding under the skin of a lamb, becoming the lamb in spite of those fangs, that would be the efficiency in life he sought after. Surprisingly, both Mu and Shang agreed on this!

Geez, how many light years must I wait before Wang Weixing came back here? Such a hassle!

...

"Anything?" A middle-aged man asked in his deep voice. Only if Ye Chong was here, he would be raising his brows as recognizing this menacing man being... Instructor Hak. He still was the ultimate leader in the case of retrieving F-58. The new order he got from the authority was to capture F-58 and have him back to the Black Coves. The catch was, the target must be unharmed, not even a scratch, by hook or by crook, which was indeed puzzling to the instructor. Even if F-58 turned out to be a skeleton artisan, he did not see the need of preserving him to an extent where he must be unwounded. As far as he knew, that would further hinder the capturing process.

The improvement this time was the kindness of the authority, as they allocated the instructor additional members in his team. Well,

obviously they really wanted this traitor of Black Coves to return in one piece.

"Nothing," one man in black coat replied coldly. He was the man Rui Bing encountered on the ship that day, the one with a female.

The mentioned female who fought Rui Bing before added, "We had skimmed through the residence record. There was no man called 'Wang Xing' discovered. We had also checked out the hologramic visual search engine and the result was negative. Windstar is a planet for tourism, traffics are heavy daily, which has brought us immense difficulties in identifying F-58."

Instructor Hak was more troubled than before. This was because it would be far-fetched for him to perform a major search all over the place since that would alert the MPA as well as the Sanctuary. And the situation would go beyond his control he feared. Nevertheless, digging out a particular man from a vast planet, that felt like finding a needle in the haystack.

The instructor could not see the progress in this search. His headache intensified!

Instructor was not the only person irritated. Rui Bing too had a headache. The apprentices of Hua Tiankai had been outrageously attentive to Rui Bing and their master seemed to be closing one eye over their misbehavior. Ugh! And Rui Bing could not get worked up, she could not toss them into fracture, since Uncle Hua was there. She treated these apprentices like flies after the flood. In the end she shut herself completely in the room as she sat quietly with hands on her lap day by day. It was relieving that those apprentices were sensible enough to not act more intrusive than they had been. They withdrew themselves and Rui Bing was more than happy to see that.

And every time in that silence she dipped herself into, she would be reminded of that man, that feeble-looking yet wielding great strength man in an unexplainable chillness... And that lick, that

moment when they exchanged strange gazes. Recalling that very scene, once again her face reddened on its own. A seizing embarrassment struck upon her. Imagine any of her acquaintance seeing her expression at the moment, they would be dropping their jaws, wondering if that was the icy cold lady Rui Bing they had been dealing with.

Luckily she could still have her meals in peace. When they gathered at one table with Hua Tiankai, the apprentices would behave themselves. Like on one lunch, every boy on the table acted like a little lamb from the pen. "Oh, by the way..." Hua Shanghai remembered something to tell from the morning, as he lifted his head and looked at Hua Tiankai, "Master, I had gone to Mr. Lan Yixing's dojo to send the invitation."

"What took you this long?" The master held his chopstick and looked displeased.

"Haha..." Hua Shangmei gave an awkward laugh, "I forgot... the September Dojo was a little inactive these few years that I could hardly remember if it was not of your kindest reminder."

"Right. Has Lan Yixing accepted it?" asked Hua Tiankai, without a sense of blaming his apprentice's forgetfulness. He himself too had vaguely remembered the existence of September dojo, though he had heard of Lan Yixing frequently before.

"Nope," he shook his head. "He said he had some personal matters that day. I would not wish to impose on him."

"Hmph!" Deng Chong at the side forced into the conversation, "Never mind if he did not want to come! Not like he is the only dojo in the town! His dojo was almost non-existent, no point even if he was here!" Hua Tiankai had 3 apprentices, the first being Zheng Zhongxing, the calm kind; the second being Hua Shangmei, the sensible kind; the third was none other than Zheng Chong, the hot-tempered kind, although he was the greatest fighter among them all.

"September dojo?" Rui Bing in her seat joined the conversation, "Could Lan Yixing a native from the September planet?"

The beauty had spoken! She had stated her inquiry! A perfect timing to flaunt your proactiveness! Hua Shangmei snatched the red button, "As expected from my senior Bing, you are also knowledgeable! Lan Yixing was indeed from September planet!" Hua Shangmei could be young at his age but he was experienced in this that he had already performed his own research before heading to September dojo. Regrets filled mind of the other two as seeing how their mate stole the attention.

"Well..." Rui Bing did not seem impressed as she had hardly laid her eyes on Hua Shangmei, facing Hua Tiankai she spoke on, "Then he must be from the Lan family of September, Mr. Lan Yixing my senior. I had heard from my father before, the uniqueness in control of muscles among members of this family. And this very senior of mine is the expert in this."

"Oh..." Rui Bing's statement was not within Hua Tiankai's expectation. He hmmed. The meal ended in silence.

Hua Shangmei was summoned to his master's room after the meal. He was in there for quite some time.

Hua Shangmei paid his second visit to September dojo. The September Lan family huh... he recalled the compliment Senior Bing made on the family. Thrilled, he would love to see the uniqueness in their skills. Well that was not his main purpose here though. There was something else in hand.

Hua Shangmei stood courteously below the platform. He did have the eagerness to test out this frail-looking Master Lan on his capabilities, but judging from Bing's words, he should be an adept in the dark, a senior unknown to the people. Well, if that was the case, it would not be wrong to express some courtesy.

Lan Yixing was watching the message recorded by Hua Tiankai. And there Ye Chong was behind, being dead serious wiping the

floor clean again.

Hua Tiankai expressed immense persistence in having Lan Yixing on the tournament this time, his hologram had addressed his formal invitation politely with all the buttering up words and admiration, which were totally incomputable to Lan Yixing.

He would like to turn this down too but... he could not, as there was one particular reason hidden in the recording he could not say no to.

Hua Tiankai stated in his message, that the tournament was not only an opportunity for exchange between apprentices of various styles, but also a competition between the masters. Of course that was not the point. The main point was there would be a huge amount of spectators that day and a majority of them were the trainees. The winners could have the chance to choose their own apprentices from the trainees! Certainly solely if consensus was made beforehand. And it was turn-by-turn basis, meaning the following winners could hit the ground picking their future apprentices only after the winner before had done it.

How could such condition not be attractive to Lan Yixing and making his heart race? Getting the right apprentice had always been the prime issue in his mind. And he could solve it once and for all if he won this tournament and picked the best ones in his eyes before the others. He would stand a better chance in obtaining actual talents to be under his supervision. There should be a few of them among spectators that many. Thinking about his problem in finding a successor, he accepted the invitation without hesitation. He was absolutely confident of his own skills.

Hua Shangmei peeked at Ye Chong on the floor. Wow, there are humans who still wipe their floors literally on the ground? That explains a lot. No wonder September dojo had been declining. The cleaners at Tianhua dojo had been long replaced by automatic cleaning machines, although Hua Shangmei was impressed to see Ye Chong being this calm and concentrated despite how trivial and

annoying the job was.

Lan Yixing requested a few minutes from Hua Shangmei. He walked into the room after, leaving Hua Shangmei having his eyes focused on this floor-wiping boy, intrigued. Ye Chong, as usual did not give his attention to this visitor, he wiped on as if it would be the last thing he would do.

Few minutes lapsed and Lan Yixing left the room, he had few words with Hua Shangmei and, "Mo Fei!" he boomed.

Ye Chong flinched, wait, isn't Mo Fei me?

He placed down the cloth and walked to Lan Yixing.

Lan Yixing passed him a piece of microchip, "Mo Fei, follow this senior to Tianhua and pass this chip to Master Hua, understand?"

Ye Chong shuddered, the worst thing he thought he could do currently was to head out, since that would put him under the risk of being exposed. But then, that was not the timing to refuse the order. He grabbed the chip unwillingly and mumbled, "Okay."

On the way to Tianhua dojo, Hua Shangmei seemed highly interested in Ye Chong somehow, as he tried setting off a conversation. Nonetheless, Mr. Monosyllabic was monosyllabic than ever. He was not in the mood for idle chatters, he was all heedful of the surrounding. If anyone would go wrong, he would go first.

Seeing how indifferent Ye Chong was reminded Hua Shangmei of his senior, his respected Bing. They were so similar!

Ye Chong had been cautious throughout the way to the dojo. Nothing alarming had happened however, as he made to Tianhua dojo safely.

Hua Shangmei led the way for him and patiently introduced every part in the dojo. They passed the training field and arrived at the accommodation.

Hua Shangmei brought Ye Chong to the room and a strong wind blew!

"Look out!" screamed Hua Shangmei.

Chapter 188: Brewing Storm III

A piece of shield of a mech zoomed towards both of them. It was rapid, it was stunning. Although the shield piece would be considered small for a mech, it had a diameter about 2 meters and it was wholly made out of alloy, which one could imagine its weight! One could tell the forcefulness in its motion by that piercing sound it made when slicing through the air. The piece could easily harm anyone in contact, be it a cut or a touch.

Judging by its direction, obviously it was aiming directly at the two men who just entered the accommodation!

Hua Shangmei was not known as a martial art expert with nothing, he reacted in extreme speed as he subconsciously exerted force on both his waist and feet, launching himself to the other side of the room, with the shield piece sliding through! The powerful air flow scratched his face. Holding the pain, he was not able to celebrate that close shave he dodged as his heart crashed down to the ground while he was in the air. "Damn!" His face was drained!

I'm done. That was the remaining thought in his head. Although he only took a glance, he estimated the weight of the piece quickly. An object with such mass traveling at such horrifying speed, its force was not something controllable with man force. If one ever got smashed by the shield, man, that would be like a pounder on a splat of meat. Hua Shangmei's face turned paler in a whole new degree the moment he imagined how he could possibly be smashed with limbs jumping all around.

An expert like him too suffered a close shave, that janitor new apprentice from September dojo was probably going to survive at a chance less than zero.

The sound of the piece crashing roared throughout the ground. Veil of dust cloaked the entire place.

Hua Shangmei twitched as he feared the orientation becoming a goner in his hands... Now how was he going to explain this to September dojo?

He was still able to demonstrate his dexterity under such a drastic fall. If there were commentators, they were so going to compliment out loud. Hua Shangmei did not care if he was going to be rated 10 upon 10 for his spin, he landed with tip on the ground and twisted his body, setting off a gaze at Ye Chong.

The apprentice of September dojo with his name Mo Fei was intact! And the piece was struck into the ground nearby!

Hua Shangmei was relieved, his face regained vitality, although it was still paler than his usual look. At least it was not dead pale like the moment the crash happened. Doubts filled his head when he saw Mo Fei being alive, he was skeptical, "No way." He couldn't believe his eyes. No way he would have made an inaccuracy in that quick calculation of his. That piece should have hit where Mo Fei was judging by the trail it travelled.

But, but... why did it change?

Don't tell me... it was him? He looked at Mo Fei escaping the mortal fate. The disbelief intensified. Did he do something to the armor? No! No. Impossible! The thought was declined straight away. Even if the strongest apprentice, the 3rd member of their brotherhood, the hot-tempered man could never shift the armor piece away without getting hurt!

Well, then what happened?

He wanted to confirm his speculation but that frightened face of Mo Fei reminded him how ridiculous his speculation was.

Technically, no one saw Ye Chong moving between the frames. He tipped the ground and dodged to the side a few degrees away. That blink Ye Chong made was so fast that it was indistinguishable, literally a column of afterimages! Ye Chong

shifted to the outer layer of the shield, with his arms crossed and exercised his strength which pushed the shield tilting away from its former direction. He took that split second to return to the previous position of his and acted frightened. Well, it was all thanks to the techniques of execution of strength he learned from Lan Yixing or he would not be able to do it in such leisure even if he managed to push the shield away.

The frightened act though, was an addition out of a reminder from Shang. Ye Chong was not sure if his act was convincing to the only audience in the room though... Well, no time to care, he was more worried if that the crash would attract the Black Covers.

Hua Shangmei was not able to figure things out as everyone in the accommodation came flooding the place before he realized.

"You two donkeys!" He heard the third apprentice shouting on top of his lungs, "I did forbid both of you to do mech combating here! And both of you are here, training in the dark huh! Think we wouldn't know? Now see what both of you have done! If anything goes wrong, you are so going to get sliced and diced by master!"

Oh, so there were two kiddos having combats on mech here? Really? Hua Shangmei, despite his good-natured personality, also had that desire to smack the two kiddos in the heads since their immature act almost costed his life!

Hua Tiankai, the owner of Tianhua dojo had showed up and he was all solemn and calm as Ye Chong saw him. Despite that, he seemed to be shocked by the crash too. If people would die in his dojo, one could imagine the impact to the image of the dojo. Well the two donkeys were imaginably skewed somewhere soon.

Hua Tiankai could be mad but he did not forsake his courtesy, as he folded his hands, expressing his apology, "It was my lack of discipline in educating my men that caused you such fear."

"It's okay," flatly Ye Chong replied. Mo Few seemed to have recovered quite well from the impact before, which was impressive

to Hua Shangmei.

Ye Chong passed Lan Yixing the microchip. "Now if you would excuse me..." He excused himself and headed back to his room to check out the content of the chip.

"Where's..." Hua Shangmei saw everyone at the scene, except for Rui Bing, "Where's Sister Bing? Have anyone seen her? How could she not come out even when a crash happen?"

"Sister Bing went out. She is not here," explained Zhen Zhongxing.

Sister Bing...

Never would Ye Chong imagine that that Sister Bing mentioned by these men was that lass in white garb.

It was not long before Hua Tiankai came out of his room. "Thank you so much." After making sure that his mission had been accomplished, Ye Chong Kindly refused the master's lunch offer and walked home alone.

...

"Xuelin... Xuelin..." Xiu was at the outside of the room, her usually fickle voice was ringing excitingly at that moment. Xuelin was surprised.

The sound of furnitures consecutively falling alerted Xuelin. What happened? What if Xiu hurt herself? Did she fall from her chair? Xuelin got up immediately and opened the door to check her cousin out.

Xiu was by her doorstep, breathing heavily apparently. Her fair cheek was reddened by her intense movement. It took Xuelin a while to react towards this unusual Xiu's expression, "Xiu...? Could you tell me what...happened?"

Xiu was still catching her breath. The running before had consumed too much of her stamina.

"Did uncle come back?" Xiu's parents were transferred to somewhere far, far away for work and she was left at Xuelin's home all these years.

"No!" she replied. Her eyes darkened and then was flaring of some kind of peculiar excitement.

"What is it then?" Scratching her head, Xuelin was wondering if this Xiu was an alien in disguise as she could not guess what she was proposing.

"Come!" she grabbed her cousin's hand, Xiu led Xuelin all the way to the processor in her room. Where did the Xiu I know go? What happened to her today? Where's that lady-like, suave Xiu? Xuelin was dumbfounded as being dragged.

Xiu took out a piece of chip.

"So, what is that?" Pointed at the thing in Xiu's hand, that was probably the reason of her excitement.

"You will know once I play it," Xiu turned over as she smiled sweetly in mystery.

She inserted the chip and the processor was prompted to project a visual. Xuelin turned stoned upon seeing the screen.

YC...? YC! This is a visual of YC! I had never seen the recording before! This had to be something new from YC! I remembered it! Xiu and I had bookmarked every visual available! This had to be the new visual! Did YC resurface this time?

It's been two years! Xuelin's mind wandered off to her past while her eyes stared at the mech dancing in the visual. After that earth shattering shock she received just now, she no longer felt any stimulation from her idol's return, which she found surprise of herself on.

Two years were a duration to be considered long of, long enough to change lots of stuffs.

Well, how about myself? Her eyes turned dazed as her mind blanked. Somehow she heard somebody letting off a sigh in her heart. Reminiscing the times when she and her cousin got all hyped up over the mysterious YC, that bitter experience emerged from the bottom of her heart.

YC... that mystifying title countless times she had thought of. Maybe it was less unreal than the mystery of the whereabouts of that cousin of Grandpa Qian namely Ye.

The corner of her lips raised into a wry smile. She shook her head slightly and shifted her sight onto Xiu who was all focused on the visual. That expressive eyes of hers somehow was depicting tenacity!

Sigh, did Xiu not yet realize that it was all nothing but a dream? Xuelin who had woken up from the dream was actually troubled from that bitter sensation of her past, even though she felt much more relieved.

Xuelin who was pondering did not notice how Xiu had already laid her glance on her through the eyes' corner. She blinked a few times, there was something forming in her pupils which grew steadier.

...

Rui Bing was on the street. That signature white garb of hers was an eye-catcher, especially with her absolute beauty and her unapproachable charm. The passersby turned their heads almost at a rate of 100% on every occurrence. Rui Bing was not disturbed by that as the sight she gathered from the passersby was no discomfort, unlike the constant attention given by those hooligans of Uncle Hua, a total headache. She utterly despised their behavior. And she could not express her disgust as she concerned the pride of Uncle Hua, so she could only keep her fists and let the hooligans act on their will.

To spend her life better, she decided to leave Tianhua dojo with

an excuse for the day. She strolled on the street. Windstar planet was a planet for tourism, the scenery was gorgeous, the landscape was unique and there were a variety of tiny stores at both sides of the streets selling fancy things. Rui Bing was entertained throughout the walk.

...

"No!! No! No!" Wei Yuan piloting his mech traveling at full speed to his school. He overslept this morning! All because of the training! He did it too much that he forgot the hours. The mech flew low as the mech was not really outstanding at its capacity. It was a really normal mech, of course it would be a losing match if Wei Yuan were to set off into the sky high to squeeze into the flock of other mechs. So he succumbed to flying low since one would be affected by the difficulties of complicated landscapes and be distracted by the buildings, which justified the drastically lower amount of mechs flying nearer to the ground.

That was not an issue to Wei Yuan with his superior piloting skill so generally flying low resulted in faster travel for him. Oh and there he was, at one road with form of 6 consecutive turnings, the most thrilling path ever of his day!

He did not decelerate. The mech advanced forward in high speed.

Oh wait! He remembered how YC performed consecutive curvy turns in his visuals. Such an opportunity to use it! Wei Yuan's heart boiled in eagerness. That was actually the Black Covers' Double Curved Steps, inspired by the 4 bodyguards of Mr. Robert. Ye Chong put it into the movement of mechs, though it was unexpected that Wei Yuan picked it up from his visuals. Wei Yuan was certainly a genius of some sort.

Wei Yuan however was not aware what laid ahead of him for his eager attempt of performance!

Chapter 189: Brewing Storm IV

Sen Hai carefully observed the surrounding. He was piloting a Cosmic Flare but he remained cautious as ever. The MPA, the nemesis should have noticed their whereabouts after such major activity from the Black Coves. No way the Black Covers could remain invisible after making such a huge move. So every Black Covers flew out with vigilance as they headed for their mission, fearing to be snuck upon by the MPA.

This was exceptionally true since there had been rumors that their group stirred up members of the Sanctuary a while ago. Sadly he was not in the position to demand that bit of information, the hows and whys were nothing he could know.

The movement was so massive that both MPA and the Sanctuary would be utter fools if they never noticed it. I seriously do not get what this Instructor Hak from Group F had in his mind when he launched this. Sen Hai was from Group B, naturally he was not under Hak's administration. He was transferred since there was an insufficiency in the work force.

Sen Hai would never know the pain Instructor Hak had to bear. It was challenging and stressful for Hak to find that needle from that haystack namely the galaxy, especially when the needle could hide and squeeze into other haystacks. If without the cooperation of local governments, finding F-58 would stay difficult as ever. Certainly Black Coves were influential enough to convince the government into assistance, the catch was however, if he were to seek assistance from them, he would have to hand them the visuals of F-58 to be publicized everywhere - that would obviously alert the MPA and the Sanctuary, which further escalated the complexity of the situation.

It would be less hassling if there was only the MPA, but there was the Sanctuary too, where their relationship started to worsen at an alarming rate. He knew the situation much better than Sen Hai,

the so-called "conflict" between the Black Coves and the Sanctuary was not a mere scratch on the surface. The counterpart lost 4 of their combat squads, it had been rumored that they even lost an ace from the fight while the Black Coves suffered the first ever dead serious fatalities all these years! Such fight had never been the case when they fought the MPA. The Sanctuary would not be resting just yet obviously.

The leader is a f*cking donkey isn't he? Did his brain shrink that day?

And now Hak is stuck in a sticky situation where he could not even reach out his limbs. Dammit, of all men, of all tasks, they picked this and they picked me! And this very task required tons of work forces, I did bring tons of work forces as mentioned but seriously they could not even get a change from the price.

The biggest bewilderment was the identity of this F-58 he used to instruct. He was actually a skeleton artisan? Well maybe he snatched a skeleton mech somewhere on the road but no matter what it was in reality, this F-58 would be the sole source of information on skeleton mechs and we got to get him.

Hak had been rather dreadful of F-58 due to his outstanding performance back in Black Coves, which made the instructor fascinated enough to presume him as the strongest pilot ever in his group, especially that extreme speed of his hands, impressive and terrifying! And that capture he attempted after that... It was a few seconds where they both exchanged moves but the fear was never-before-felt. The accurate calculation, the reasonable utilization of the situation, the potent capability in combats and the fearless decisiveness, combining these elements would make F-58 the greatest pilot ever!

Hak had been replaying the scene that night numerous times afterwards and there were quite a few parts which he could never comprehend. He tried imagining putting himself in the shoes of those men but the conclusion he obtained was depressing. If he

was there, it was in fact, either captured or slaughtered. There was nothing better he could have acted.

Terrifying... Such a terrifying monster!

...

Sen Hai was still in the sky piloting Cosmic Flare. He could be pissed by Instructor Hak's arrangement, Instructor Hak could have zero involvement to his career in the Black Coves, he still tried his very best to execute the orders. The discipline in Black Coves was something to be drilled in the heads of the men, so stern that it was unimaginable for people outside, which justified his curiosity over F-58's sudden betrayal. How could he ever survive without the Texturizing Solution? Sen Hai's heart felt all heated up the moment he reminisced that odd sensation where the solution covered every inch of his skin, opening up the pores . Texturizing solution, the silver liquid would strengthen his body by maintaining the balance between strength and flexibility of muscles, allowing them to have parallel growth without breaking the balance.

After he had assassinated the target of his greatest spite 3 years ago, he offered himself to Black Coves, body and soul as it was Black Coves that gave him every of these. Each day he grew stronger but also more in daze? Sigh, what am I thinking? Such boring thought, like stop it! Criticized himself, his focus went back to the surrounding.

Wait... His eyes went large as they glared at the space-warping mech on the screen.

Double Curved Steps?

Of course he recognized the step after all these years in the Black Coves! Ye Chong never expected that that application of the step in mech was not the creativity of those bodyguards under Mr. Robert, it was in fact a common technique among the Black Covers! It was merely that he stayed at the Black Coves so briefly that he never

was exposed to these techniques.

Yes, that's right! It had to be Double Curved Steps!

Sen Hai affirmed to what he saw. Double Curved Steps do not restrict on the size of the curves, but it had demands on the pace as well as the rhythmic sense of it which differ from the usual turning he saw on other mechs!

And he had pinpointed one more fact, where Double Curved Steps were the combat technique exclusive to the Black Covers. It was not really difficult but no way one could imitate the steps without proper tutorial.

F-58? Was that you?

The code sprung in his head. Uncontrollably his heart raced!

Did I hit the jackpot today? Did the lady luck smile at me?

Is that you? F-58! Is that you!? He would not want to spend more time on figuring things out. For someone who knew Double Curved Steps, other than our men, it had to be that F-58!

0.1 second lapsed and he made up his mind - to capture, alone!

Being inside the circle, he knew the rules well enough - if he were to ever inform the authority, he would not be sharing any credit of it. The inhuman competition between the groups was also something unimaginable to folks out there. The time when he and Instructor Hak headed out with other mates, all of them came back either wounded or killed and everyone from the Black Coves knew it. So, no reason he should inform the authorities! If such merit ever laid onto his hands, he would be flourished! More advanced techniques, more advanced mech, more advanced position! His eyes tightened.

The most important motivation to his one selfish attempt of taking this slice of credit was the mech. Clearly one could say that F-58 picked an extremely substandard, cheap mech to avoid the attention, namely Volt mech.

The logic behind this decisive factor was how F-58 would be a fish in the net disregarding his amazing skills, as long as he piloted that cheap mech, he would be no match to the Cosmic Flare. Sen Hai could also imagine a similar situation if Instructor Hak were to pilot this metal piece and failed to escape the grasp of his. The capabilities of a pilot in the field would be determined by the capabilities of the mech other than his own skills! Although he was aware that F-58 might possessed a skeleton mech, well, would he have the time to switch into that then?

No!

The idea flashed in his head as quickly as he flew towards the Volt mech like a shooting star, striking the name of his mech - the flare in the cosmos.

...

Ye was returning to the dojo. He was walking on the street under the invigilation of Shang who continuously provided feedbacks of the surrounding. As being well-aware of the situation, Shang who had been the talker behaved himself.

At least there was nothing strange going on. Once he stepped into September dojo, he would be alright!

"Ye!" Shang's voice came abruptly, "There's a Black Cover's mech ahead, seemed to be engaged."

Engaged? In fight?!

Ye Chong's heart skipped a beat. He recovered fast. If it was one single mech, he would be fine. Do we fight? Do I call Han Jia? Ye Chong was stimulated. Wait, they are fighting? If the Black Covers made it here, they must be here for me. Then why are they fighting? Were they warring with the MPA? His speculation was turned down by Shang immediately. It was not a MPA mech, rather it was a Volt mech.

Volt mech? That was just some junkish mech... Ye Chong was

feeling odd.

The time taken for Ye Chong to get into the cabin of his mech was magically shorter compared to the other pilots. Whether there was the rope ladder to the cabin was not his concern, he climbed all the way up like a mutated ape. He rolled into Han Jia.

...

Weeeeeee...

Wei Yuan was having fun making the acrobatic performance. Boom! He lost control as he began spinning.

He was not clear about the situation but he could deduce that his mech was crashed by some nonsensical driver! Utterly angered, he cursed, who the hell forgot his eyes when he piloted the mech? How the hell he got his license? He swiftly tapped a few switches, the engines were on. Volt jerked clumsily after a few tumbling in the air. The dizziness from the intense flipping lingered in his head.

Hmph. Sen Hai sneered. F-58 was weaker than I thought. He actually kept his position instead of taking the flow to dodge the attack, aren't you a walking bullseye or something?

At this rate, it would be only a matter of one shoot to finish the foe off. But the authority ordered to capture this F-58 alive... and I should not be wounding him, well that was not much of a problem either.

The Cosmic Flare zapped to the back of Wei Yuan like a phantom. Wei Yuan remained dizzy and his outdated detection system could not detect the existence of this Black Cove mech in the dark. Wham! One more blow! The elbows of Cosmic Flare struck upon the back of Volt, causing Volt to land onto the ground harsh like a meteorite. Boom! The ground was hollowed.

The pedestrians on the ground scurried away like animals of a forest fire, only few fearless kinds lingered at the corner, wanting

to witness the very scene. Fearless they might be, they still feared to head to the frontline.

Sen Hai landed by the hollow. He snorted, with this level of crash and that cheap buffering system of Volt, the pilot would not be protected into safety. The pilot must have fainted. Out of his carefulness, Sen Hai also destroyed Volt's engines right before it crashed to the ground.

Volt was stuck into the ground, not moving in a bit. Sen Hai snickered in his Cosmic Flare. Of course he would not just be snickering, he flipped Volt over and withdrew the dagger, a few hushes the chest of Volt was scratched a square. The tip of the dagger locked at the center, one pick and the sliced armor went tossed away like a giant coin to the side.

Han Jia hid itself in the crowd of mechs at the side. He was confident to tell that the Cosmic Flare must be from the Black Coves, which was weird... A Black Cover usually would keep his or her firepower before the target was confirmed. They should not be launching attacks randomly. So who is that person in the mech? Why would the Black Cover aim him?

Wait.

"Shang, is there any other Black Covers around here?" Ye Chong got something in his mind.

"Nope, no other Black Covers were detected in the proximity of 50 kilometers," asserted Shang.

"Good." His tone was cold as blizzard as his hands started shrouding into stacks of afterimages.

The recovery rate of Wei Yuan was clearly beyond Sen Hai's expectation. Wei Yuan was proud of his piloting skills the most, which justified the endurance of his body being stronger than most men. Moreover to protect himself better, he had already requested his father to modify the buffering system inside the cabin, well

since he feared some accidents like these could happen.

Wei Yuan opened his eyes to see a giant mechanical arm reaching him gradually and was making a grasp round him!

Wei Yuan's face was paler than a paper.

He might be a mentally stable boy but a boy he was in fact, being in his early adolescence, how in the world would he have experience with being treated like a puppet in a crane machine?

Oh no! I'm doomed! His eyes enlarged. The world suddenly became slow in his eyes, as the palm came towards him slowly like the slow motion in movies. Right at that second when the gigantic hand touched him, he could hear a profound sound of crash coming from the outside. The hand was then withdrawn in shock like a serpent being stabbed.

Ah! Wei Yuan shrieked. The mechanical hand swept his left arm when it was taken back! He could hear the cracking sound of his bones! His face went distorted as droplets of sweat gushed over his head like lava into water.

Wei Yuan's face had lost its colors.

Enduring the pain, Wei Yuan was more than convinced that he would be real done for if he did not make his move. He was not aware of the happening outside, but he knew this would be his only opportunity to survival! That owner of the mechanical hand who nearly captured him had to be some evil-natured kind. Anyone could tell from that huge gap he cut open on the mech!

Wei Yuan struggled his way out of the gap.

And he saw a scene where he believed he would remember for the rest of his life!

A mech which both the texture and color were ominous as hell was smashing that mech whose nearly caught him. And the techniques were obviously the type visible in Virtual World. His eyes went fully focused on the fight, burning with passion as he

forgot the pain on his arm.

...

Rui Bing knotted her brows as she saw the two mechs fighting in front.

Well it was nothing to see two mechs competing for their silly pride from time to time, but it would be something if they were doing it on the street, in public! She despised that since such an unprofessional fight of dead-or-alive would easily hurt any innocents nearby!

Wait a second... That movement of the mech was very orderly... Interesting...

It was the first time in her life she saw a mech fighting in such style, which intrigued her to keep watching along.

Chapter 190: Brewing Storm V

The scene was all theatrical and majestic yet the audience turned out to be not as grand in number, as hardly few of them truly stayed back and spectated the entire sequence. The pace of the daily life had always been a race of time which would only keep accelerating. This is exceptionally relatable on a working morning where workers and students would head over their respective places in a rush - the peak hour of the traffic and people would mostly zoom above the sky right past the scene. There were few pilots at the lower altitude and negligible number of pedestrians on the street. With this much of action going on their working morning, anyone would shake their head muttering how this was too much for their Mondays and walk away.

Well, it was not stone age where a mech would be a luxury. Everyone could own a mech, even those armed with regular weaponries which were actually allowed by the government, till that line was crossed, where these weaponries were not used for self-defense, but to harm people. Government would severely punish anyone who abused the weaponry yet it had been an issue for them to do so. Performing weapon control was a hassle to begin with. Nonetheless as the government enforced the control sternly over the years, a pedestrian versus pedestrian with open fires like this was already halted quite effectively, compared to those chaotic years in the 5 major galaxies. It was a relief to the older generation as they reminisced those dark ages.

No doubt, the enforcement had something to do with the surveillance cameras they set at every corner of the city. The hologramic camera could monitor and record the happenings at the corners to assist the forces.

And due to this, it had become a habit for Mu and Shang to get into the surveillance system for Ye Chong, to wipe every frame containing him off the record.

It was beyond Shang's expectation to see Ye Chong getting into action this quickly.

The pair of daggers in dark emanated the smell of death as they swung into two images striking onto that Cosmic Flare without a sound! Klink! The fist fell, then the elbow, the knees, everything collapsed like a rain of gears, as the loud rushes of clinking roared throughout the place.

Han Jia's anti detection system cloaked itself in Cosmic Flare's radar, which made Cosmic Flare a blind man being quietly slaughtered by an assassin from the back. The result? It was obvious.

Klank! Within twinkling of eyes, Cosmic Flare had fully transformed into a pile of junk with countless cuts on it. The flesh oozed out of the wounds were a disgusting sight. Ye Chong never intended to spare anyone in battle, especially when the one was from Black Coves!

"Ye, why did you move? Don't you think this is a bad idea? Don't you?" Shang's tone was inflated with disbelief when he thought Ye Chong would be the last person in the galaxy to commit such a novice mistake. All this while, Ye Chong's behavior had been greatly influenced by Mu, being totally logical and analytical in the situation and that did not translate into such a reckless act from him today. This was never-before-seen.

"Oh? So my modification on you had started to work finally?" Shang's pride in the words was awkward to Ye Chong.

"Mhm, maybe I was a bit reckless today." Ye Chong regretted slightly himself the moment he withdrew that pair of daggers, since likely he was going to be revealed after the move. Could it be the spite accumulated over the endless time he was hunted by the Black Covers? However, this was a single player fight so Ye Chong was confident to finish him before the Black Covers could even notice. Then, that was not a painful mistake after all.

"So Shang..." As he thought of his unusual recklessness today, puzzled he asked, "What happened to me?"

"To be or not to be, that's the question. But to finish the problem before you, that's a better question!" Shang's words were more puzzling to Ye Chong, it felt as if they had both switched places.

Well if he had done it, he should not be wasting time resenting it. The best solution would always be figuring on how to get to the optimal path of the situation. Shang was right, finish the problem before me, that'd be first. Hmph, seems like we could not spare the remnants either! He took a glance at the cluster of spectators far away, who were dumbfounded or even stoned. Ye Chong calculated his next move, he got to finish whatever he had to before they realized the situation.

If it was the Ye Chong years back, he probably would have annihilated the audience as well. But that was in the past, the present him would never do that.

At that moment of repentance where he could not believe how Shang could be more logical than himself, "Ye! Look at the back of your mech!" Shang shrieked.

Ye Chong was struck by his shriek. Am I getting snuck upon? Did the Black Cover call for backups?

He changed the camera to his back hurriedly. He took a glance. He took the second glance. He took the- "I saw nobody?" In the midst of confusion, Shang made a literal earth-obliterating statement in the history of Ye Chong, he howled, "Ye, look over there! It's your Bing Bing!" The tone was dramatically excited and intensified!

Judging by the tone, Shang probably had detected some proclaimed "beauty" again, I guess? Sighed Ye Chong, though he had never seen Shang being so intense before. Then it should not be a beauty which he would be complimented on every female he came across in focus... Well, he only got this intense when he saw a

Do-Kun stone?

Wait.

Bing Bing? And my Bing Bing?

"What Bing Bing?" asked Ye Chong, bewildered. Could it be also the name of ultra rare ore like Do-Kun stone? No, judging by his tone, it could be rarer! That has to be it, or why was Shang jumping up and down in the screen claiming that Bing Bing was there and Bing Bing was mine? Such weird wording...

The artificial indulgence shut himself up. A moment of silence and then he somehow rebooted himself to respond with an increase pitch, "Ye! Don't tell me!" He could not be convinced, "Don't tell me you even forgot who Bing Bing was!" Ye Chong could hear the clogging tears in the tone.

"Bing... as in... the outdated search engine? I think I had seen them on Trash Planet before. Or you meant 'Bing, bing, bong, bong, bing, bing, bing, bing'? You know I really hated politician speech, especially that one you forced me to watch right?" Ye Chong was figuring out as his mind launched a dedicated search program to find out the items related to 'Bing Bing', his eyes rolled over the scanning zone behind him. There was nothing interesting in particular other than those few spectators...

"Holy! Matrimony! My Fal! Galaxy!" Shang sounded like he was crying now... "Ye, how can you be reckless on things like this? You are missing out the best part of your life! And, man, I never knew you could be this heartless, Ye, that you could not remember the very first vict-I mean partner you licked, that girl in the white garb, remember? Did you forget it? Tsk, tsk, tsk, you are indeed a potential candidate to be the bad boy who played dope on girls. I could still recall the time when she asked for your eternal loyalty in marriage..."

Garb? The girl in her fair white garb flashed in his head. Her face was fuzzy but her garbs remained clear as yesterday, with that

formal posture of her, sitting down. It was permanent in his head, a sealed memory in the drive!

White garb... white garb... The search program rebooted as Ye Chong mumbled the new keyword, his eyes wondered upon the crowd.

!

His pupils enlarged. I saw it! White garb!

Out of the blue, a strong sense of familiarity rose in his heart. It really was her! The fuzzy imagery of her regained its clarity in his head, with the charm, the sense. Ye Chong's finger gave a tap on the control panel, the visual of Rui Bing was quickly enlarged before him.

She was still the same demure and nonchalant self. Her dark hair was long and smooth, her white garb was untainted as her personality. Her knotted brows... they seemed to be displeased.

Ye Chong carefully looked at this girl who remained in his thoughts for so long. It felt like time had turned back to two years ago where she asked him for marriage and he was innocent or more like... lack of awareness. His heart felt warm for some reason...

A while back Ye Chong took up an emergency Biology course conducted by Shang. After consecutive bombardment of information, at last, he came into senses of the workaround of this feeling and relationship. "Shall we move onto the other chapters?" It was fun while it lasted, Ye Chong declared to shift his attention onto the more interesting aspects of biology such as the anatomy of human body as well as myology to study the dynamic of how his muscles could work better. And certainly it was silencing to Shang.

And it was this tuition class which allowed Ye Chong to understand how that lick he made was nothing but an act upon

instinct of humanity, well, although he strongly believed that it would be essential to control and inhibit such intuitive act in his career.

Subconsciously, that peculiar aroma came into his nose again as the sight of her fairness reflected in his eyes. The tingling feeling of his tongue... Ye Chong's heart raced, an urge to jump to her rose!

...

Ugh... Ugh...

Wei Yuan who was biting his teeth climbed out of the cabin. For a 14-year-old boy like him, it was quite rare to see such tenacity.

Mech combats? The intensive battle caught his eyes immediately. No, that felt more like a mismatch... One mech bashing up the other... That evil mech was now thrashed like a sandbag.

Ah! Screamed Wei Yuan.

Those steps! The steps he had learned through these days... That unique offenses... They were before him. Really? His eyes grew in size, fearing he was at illusion.

No! It is him! Muttered Wei Yuan, Oh my gosh! I finally met this guy!

YC! That strange-looking mech must be YC!

"YC!" Boomed Wei Yuan, worked up, "I knew it's you! YC!" He waved his hands excitedly, Owwwwwww... He somehow had forgotten the wound on his left hand.

Ah! I could not voice it... Ow ow ow ow! The piercing pain came from his arm. A slide on his feet and he rolled off the mech.

!

Ye Chong snapped out of his confusion as he regained control of the mech, even though he was finding the experience to be truly eerie. Such a potent instinct... that I lost control of myself so

easily.

Ye Chong shrouded to Wei Yuan upon seeing him falling. He reached out his hands and grabbed Wei Yuan.

The boy had already fainted by then. The excitement triggered the pain in his fractured arm which sent his mind away as being torturing it was.

"Oh? Isn't this the fella who peeked at you?" Mu and Shang shared the same databank, it would be natural for Shang to be aware of Mu's investigation over Wei Yuan back then.

"Peek", of all verbs, Shang chose "peek", as expected from the artificial indulgence. So Shang-ish.

"Why did the Black Cover attack him? The member seemed to be striving to capture him alive," asked Ye Chong.

"How the heck would I know?" Shang's tone was carefree as usual.

Ye Chong took a look at Wei Yuan in his embrace but the observation could not give him a proper explanation.

"Ye, are we moving? Or are you planning to have a nice reunion with your Bing Bing?" teased Shang.

"Not mine," rebutted Ye Chong. He glanced at Wei Yuan and almost dropped him to the ground. He got an idea. He tossed the boy to the back.

Wow. The pilot of this mech is crude... Frowned Rui Bing. He literally murdered the opponent in seconds. When did the security of Windstar turn this bad? People actually fight and commit murder on the street whenever they like now?

And she saw that boy from the rescued mech flying towards her.

What does he want? Rui Bing went alert. She saw the tumbling boy being unconscious. He would be the mud on the ground if she did nothing.

Coincidence? Or was it on purpose?

The boy inched towards in the air. Curses! Rui Bing scolded at the pilot in her mind as she positioned herself. If that jerk got out of the cabin, I am so going to toast him! The boy came quickly and she got to make her move. She spread her legs slightly and lifted both her hands at the height of her chests back and front. Till the moment her hands touched the body of the boy, she muttered and exhaled slowly as she exerted slight forces on her palms. Her top body remained still, her legs were backing off rapidly.

7 to 8 steps back, she awaited that timing where the inertia vanished, Rui Bing slammed the ground with her heels and ceased moving.

Boom!

Rui Bing was shocked by the explosion. She caught the boy yet her hands were shaking for once. That horrible mech had disappeared and the remnants of the black mech... all turned into flares...

What a plan. He actually remembered to destroy the evidence. Thought Rui Bing as she dodged the pieces with agility.

Han Jia performed the sequence in a whirlwind that it came so suddenly everyone was still in shock. Right when they got the situation, this happened. Those in the mechs were fine at least, but the pedestrians? They could not find any shelter technically. Most of them were wounded by the specks of the mech as well as the explosion.

"The hell is going on!"

"How could he do that!"

"This is satanic!"

Curses echoed within the street.

Rui Bing on the other hand, was holding the fainted boy,

wondering what she was supposed to do next.

Ye Chong sneaked to the the far corner. Only after Shang confirmed the course being clear, he kept Han Jia away at a deserted place. With a thumping heart, he returned to September dojo.

What a relief. At least he would be safe for now.

"Ahem, Ye, you should learn from your mistakes as this is utterly irresponsible," Shang sounded serious.

"But kekekekekekeke... I thought of forgiving you since the fact that we saw your lovely Bing Bing today." Laughed Shang naughtily, "A more important issue! Come, shall we gents talk about our Bing Bing? Hmm, tell me, Ye, what was your feelings back there? Were you excited? Or..."

Wow, Shang, could you leave me to "learn from my mistakes" now? I could be repenting wholeheartedly... like really...

Whimpered Ye Chong.

Chapter 191: Brewing Storm VI

"Brother, does master really intend to join that tournament?" The second apprentice of Lan Yixing whispered to his senior.

"Don't ask me. I have no idea what master is thinking. We can't be avoiding the stage once we get there, I just fear if we did, we would..." The eldest apprentice lost his prudent nature the moment he mentioned this, as he sighed, his sight was fickle.

"Master is such a... sigh... whatever. Just leave me here. I can't be gambling my pride. Frankly speaking I am not that into the martial arts, exchanging fists whatsoever. I had been following his teaching all these years and... sigh! Also, brother, I wanted to tell you something..." He turned down his volume, carefully he spoke, "I wanted to learn Circuit Engineering."

"Circuit Engineering?" The brother frowned. He was aware of the fact that this younger brother in apprenticeship of his was not interested in the combats although he invested almost half of his youth on this collapsing dojo. Both of them joined Lan Yixing under a debt of gratitude. They begged to become his apprentices to return the favor. Lan Yixing accepted both of them as seeing their sincerity while he was actually looking for successors to his fists.

Who knows... both of them were never the candidates to begin with. They worked hard yet the progression was insignificant. They lost their passion after some time and grew lazier. It was a disappointment, a moment of sighing for Lan Yixing. He realized it would be fruitless even if he forced them so he stopped lecturing them.

They might not be talented but they were hardworking since the beginning. Their basics were great so the daily introductory courses were conducted by them at the dojo. Lan Yixing was troubled by his succession being unable to work out on his will,

while seeing the two apprentices of his being fruitless as ever. He was muted and had become more withdrawn over time. He did not know how he should talk this out. He became less approachable in the end.

"Yes..." The volume was lower.

"Then are you heading to school?" The frown tightened, since that would mean this brother of his would be staying at school for the rest of his life.

"Yes." It was nearly inaudible.

The brother sighed, "Have you told this to master?"

"Nope," he shook his head as he replied. "I have a proposition for you! Could you please tell Master this for me?" His eyes were pleading.

"Ugh..." He looked at the puppy eyes, his heart softened, "Alright. I'll help you. I'll try. But you can't go if master disallows." The last line went stern, which was a rare nature for him.

"Of course."

Lan Yixing who happened to pass by overheard their exchange. He lifted his hand and he put it down. A moment of silence lapsed as his eyes lost the luster. He wavered back to his room soundlessly.

...

Ye Chong required a huge portion of his day to work on his alchemy and that was not the only thing on his priority list.

With the Biology course conducted by Shang these days, he understood the human anatomy much better and came to the realization of how amazing the Black Covers' technique was as some of them aim the particular spot of human body to achieve desired effects such as to strike an instant death and to disable their mobility. The more bizarre part was Ye Chong could not find

any proper reference to support these details, which obviously defined the Black Covers' vaster understanding of human anatomy compared to the 5 major galaxies.

What Ye Chong had learned from the Black Coves were the basics, they were more sophisticated than most of the combats he had witnessed before however.

He had been convinced to the fact that Black Coves had the most sophisticated techniques of combat ever, till he came to the understanding of the fact that there would always be a hidden dragon in the valley, his perception got to change.

For instance, those techniques Lan Yixing taught to him hand by hand were discovered to be not as underwhelmed as he had assumed to be compared with Black Coves style, especially in the aspect of muscle-motor control, Lan Yixing had the upper hand of the show. The catch was these techniques also required a high level of execution, a demand on the strength of the motor, the reaction speed, the flexibility and so on.

Nonetheless, these did not form a challenge to Ye Chong. He could feel the potency of martial arts gradually as he mastered the gist of it.

The burst strength he could execute was 1.5 times of his past. He was the kind who wielded monstrous strength and now he had become the one fist killer. He could break an alloy gate with a mere punch like before. What differed was he believed that he could do it without shattering his fist this time. He could already manipulate his muscle to perform a drastic vibration to buffer the shock from breaking through the door. And that would be how his fist was going to be protected, a result of his tenacious research these days.

Lan Yixing only taught Ye Chong the basics too but it was that curiosity in Ye Chong to be able to further expand the basics into something astonishing as he discovered some intriguing yet

practical techniques within.

Of course it was all thanks to Ye Chong's inhuman physique. If it was not for body, Ye Chong would have not been able to experiment those basics enough to pick them up.

As much as he recognized his body, he took even more effort to practice these basics seemingly exclusive for him. He wondered, how strong could Lan Yixing be? If compared to those of the Black Coves, who would be stronger?

Lan Yixing in reality was totally unaware of Ye Chong's ninja improvements. He was depressed. Lan family of the September was the well-known martial artists and now... they were heading to their demise, with no successor to bring the techniques to the next century. The conversation between his apprentices was heartbreaking indeed, yet he could not express his anger on them. He might be a reserved person but he was not unreasonable. Keeping the apprentices stuck with him would only put their youth into waste while hindering their path in the end.

He had made up his mind, to let them go, break free and do whatever they wanted, disregarding a wilting tree like him. Sigh... the combats, the martial artists... are they going to be extinct one day?

No! I can't be letting the Lan family martial arts end here! Tenacity came in his eyes. Clenched his fists, making the cracking sounds loud, determination boiled in his blood. By hook or by crook, he had to make something happen during the tournament. It was the golden opportunity to make a turnabout!

But...

That was another headache. None of his apprentices seemed keen to join the show while he was also aware of their standards. Teaching newbies was not an issue, but... staging their skills was... embarrassing I guess.

Well I can't be heading there all by myself.

Hua Tiankai was so great... His dojo was running well, with every of his apprentices being both talented and young. Look at me...

Sigh, what a puzzle.

Wait!

He remembered he had a new boy in his dojo. Yes! How could I forget that? He was just a new boy, a part timer! Unlike an official apprentice, even if he was underwhelming, people would not judge! "He is just a part time student who came to my dojo less than a month ago." That was more than enough to decline the staging offer.

Yes, yes, yes. Lan Yixing fancied the idea. Right, that would be it! He spat his breath and confirmed bringing Ye Chong to the tournament. Well then, I should be investing sometimes to teach him a few new tricks. Although Lan Yixing did not believe Ye Chong to have the mastery to learn all these, well somehow it would comfort him better doing so.

Ye Chong who was indulged in his research had no idea that his fate had been decided by Lan Yixing without a word.

"Ye! Ye! Hah! I got it!" Shang was excited as ever.

"What did you get?" asked Ye Chong, his action remained as he felt the rhythm and changes in his flipping arms.

"I got you some Bing Bing news. I know why she came here for. Hah, Ye, interested? Intrigued? Wink wink, nudge, nudge." Shang seriously sounded like a kid working up over an extra candy in front of his friends.

He could feel his hands weakened but he forced it up, "Not interested," he replied expressionlessly.

"Ha~ Ye, stop lying, you can't lie to me. Your heartbeat sped up just now. Hehehehe..." Ridiculed Shang.

Ye Chong was too busy to entertain as he knew his further responses would only get the artificial indulgence more excited. He concluded from his journey, the best method to deal with Shang was to shut up and show ignorance.

"Tsk..." Muttered Shang, "Ye, you are a boring person you know what. How could you ignore your beloved Bing Bing? Gosh, it would be a life misfortune for any woman to marry you! Yikes, such a senseless boy. Bing Bing came here for the tournament this time you know?"

"Tournament?" That was the keyword Ye Chong perceived from the line.

"Yeah, there would be lots of professional fighters I heard. Ye, this is a real life combating you know? One on one, man to man, flesh to flesh. Hehehehe, our Bing Bing is the VIP for the show. Tsk, tsk, tsk, as expected from her, all great and grace...", complimented Shang.

"So..." He changed his tone, "Ye, how about we join this tournament?"

"No!" The answer was firm. That rush in his head had convinced Ye Chong the fact that he could never be eternally calm as Mu. Only the alertness from time to time could effectively reduce mistakes like this. Despite the fact that he was really interested to witness the real deals fighting, he still wished to reduce his exposure to the public.

"Ye... You really wanted to see your lovely Bing Bing all alone at the seat, watching those men fighting in blood and sweat without anyone to share her inner thoughts to? Ye, don't you have a soft spot for ladies, a loving and gentle nature to humanity?"

"Mo Fei!" The scream interrupted Shang's motivational talk.

Thank God! Ye Chong was appreciating the scream, he ran out of the gate and saw Lan Yixing at the outside.

"Follow me," concisely Lan Yixing spoke, less talk more work as usual.

They got to his room. It was a spacious room but it was rather simple... or even crude. There was no adornment, although there was one practice room inside separated by one wall with his bedroom.

Lan Yixing led Ye Chong to his practice room.

"Show me what I have taught you before," he spoke flatly.

As he said, Ye Chong performed everything he taught before. He tried controlling himself during the process. He did not want to frighten the master by showing some odd moves.

"Fair," concisely the man commented. His expression unchanged, although it was an earthquake in his head. Did he miss out a lot on this boy? The basics might look simple but they were not simple to grab the gist within! Mo Fei somehow wielded the gist...

He calmed himself as he spoke slowly, "Today onwards, I would teach you a few new moves. Please learn them with determination."

Chapter 192: Brewing Storm VII

As he exited from Lan Yixing's room, Ye Chong's mind was filled with Lan Yixing's demonstration. Powerful! It was too powerful! Ye Chong was stupefied. He walked quickly and silently back to his room. What he wanted to do now was to imitate Lan Yixing's demonstration earlier and identify the key to those moves. While Lan Yixing had already pointed out the places where he should take note of, achieving true mastery was not a simple process.

He closed the doors carefully but did not begin immediately. Instead, he began to rewind Lan Yixing's words in his head. Ye Chong sat still like an old monk, and Shang sensibly left him alone.

Ye Chong sat like that for an entire 30 minutes.

Abruptly, Ye Chong's eyes opened, and began to move!

...

Ye Chong inhaled deeply. He was too absorbed earlier to notice, but now he could feel the soreness all over his body. These two moves were very demanding; even with his body, just a few rounds of practice was enough to exhaust him.

However, Ye Chong was satisfied with the power of these two moves. He believed that, even against Black Cove mech pilots, he would be able deal with them with these two strange techniques.

However, there were always pros and cons to every technique. These two moves were powerful, but placed a heavy burden on his body. In this respect, combat and mech piloting were similar to each other.

No wonder Lan Yixing was worried for his apprentice. From his tone, these moves did not seem to be any advanced combat moves; even so, they were impossible for regular people. Just how powerful was Lan Yixing, and what did the real advanced combat moves look like? Ye Chong was beginning to look forward to them.

However, Ye Chong could not ponder at those questions just yet. He was now fully occupied with the two moves that Lan Yixing had just taught him. Ye Chong seemed to be deep in thought. As he grew more proficient with these two moves, he seemed to realize something amusing.

"Black Cove was not the only school of combat experts." Such was Ye Chong's realization.

Lan Yixing did not fully understand why he would indulge in Ye Chong's interests. He thought of those instructions as consolatory since he had tried to teach them before to two other students, and neither of them had managed to master them. How could a new apprentice like Mo Fei be able to learn something so complicated?

This thought brought a mocking smile to his lips - to think that his gains and losses would affect him so much. Lan Yixing could not help but heave a long sigh.

Rui Bing sat beside Wei Yuan. Wei Yuan was mostly healed now. With current technology, as long as it was not instant death, injuries could usually be managed. Wei Yuan said nothing after he woke up, but insisted on staying beside Rui Bing at all times. Rui Bing was annoyed, but she was also moved inside. Wei Yuan's pitiful look was endearing, and so she let him be. She also thought it odd - why would that mech leave Wei Yuan with her that day?

Could that mech's pilot know her? Impossible! The thought was quickly dismissed. Since young, her social ties were fairly simple and limited. She could not recall knowing anyone who could pilot a mech.

Suddenly, it was as if she was struck by lightning! A person's figure began to emerge clearly in her mind!

Could it be him?

Rui Bing fell into a daze.

After a long moment, she recovered and laughed quietly at

herself. What was with her? How could it be him? Such a coincidence was highly unlikely! Besides, the other party may just be simply getting rid of Wei Yuan, but happened to toss him in her direction.

Wei Yuan watched as Rui Bing's icy profile changed into a myriad of expressions. He was curious, but kept his thoughts to himself. He already found out what happened that day from this seemingly cold lady. As for the details, Wei Yuan was always very careful with them, or he would not have recognized YC from his footwork. After some detailed questioning, he immediately realized that all was not what it seemed to be.

He would never believe that YC would rescue him, only to toss him aside. If that was the case, then YC would never have saved him in the first place. There must be a reason behind this. Wei Yuan's first thought was that YC knew the beautiful and cold lady, and knew that she would be able to catch him too. Else, the whole exercise of rescuing him and tossing him aside, only for him to die from the throw, was a pointless one that YC would never do based on his personality that valued efficiency.

While he did not know YC, and had never had any direct contact with him, he still believed that he could understand YC to a certain degree.

On the other hand, who was the one who ambushed him? Why would YC save him?

Numerous questions nagged at him, but he could not make heads nor tails out of them. However, he was certain that this icy beauty was definitely related to YC, and the only link he had to YC.

While this may all just be a result of his imagination, he was unwilling to let go of this possibility, which may be his final hope. That was why he insisted on sticking around this beautiful and cold lady. He had spoke to his father and came up with an excuse. Fortunately, his track record of honesty helped in convincing his

father that nothing was amiss. He then contacted the school and offered another excuse to apply an extended period of leave.

He must find YC, no matter what!

There was light knocking on the door, and Wei Yuan took a glance at the cold beauty sitting upright beside him. Rui Bing knitted her brow slightly, but did not move from her position. The knocking continued, and still Rui Bing did not move, but her displeasure was now apparent. No matter how obtuse Wei Yuan was, he could still recognize the icy beauty's expression.

The visitor was determined, and the knocking did not cease.

Wei Yuan took another glance at the icy beauty before going to the door himself and opening it.

Outside was a young man with delicate features and an easy expression. He held himself with great refinement, and smiled gently when he saw Wei Yuan behind the door. "You're up now, Junior Brother? How's your hand?" His gentle expression of care was refreshing.

"Yes." Wei Yuan answered, and stood to the side for him to enter.

"Ah, Senior Sister Bing is also here." The young man greeted Rui Bing with a smile. "So the beauty's name is Bing. Her name is true to her nature," thought Wei Yuan.

"Junior Brother Hua, is something the matter?" Rui Bing wore her usual icy expression, but one could read a certain dismissive tone in her words.

"There's a fair on chemist spices, first of the year in the Bekaert township this afternoon. Shangmei would appreciate your company, if you are willing?" Hua Shangmei still wore a gentle expression with a charming smile, and he was looking very confident of himself.

It seemed that there was nothing in particular about this undeniably handsome young man that was offensive to Wei Yuan.

However, when he noticed the fiery enthusiasm in his eyes, Wei Yuan still felt an unexplainable discomfort. In the end, Wei Yuan was only a 14-year-old. He worshipped YC, and had decided that this icy beauty who had saved his life definitely had a deep relationship with YC.

Seeing Hua Shangmei's advance made Wei Yuan uncomfortable. He had unconsciously decided that Rui Bing was a lady friend of YC, and should not be tainted.

Rui Bing's expression turned even colder, and spoke with some displeasure, "Junior Brother Hua, please mind yourself!"

For some reason, hearing those words made Wei Yuan, observing silently from the side, relax a little.

Hua Shangmei maintained his composure and apologized, "My apologies if I had offended you, Senior Sister. It's just that Shangmei noticed that Senior Sister has been staying in your room every day, and wanted to relieve your boredom by inviting you for an excursion. Please do not be offended." Even when apologizing, Hua Shangmei still behaved courteously without any awkwardness, making him difficult to dislike.

Rui Bing may not like him, but seeing his easy demeanor and refined ways made her pleased on Uncle Hua's behalf, to have such a good student. However, Rui Bing had no intention of giving him hope, merely replying with her usual coldness, "Thank you for consideration, Junior Brother Hua. I understand. However, please do not bother me with such trivialities!" Rui Bing spoke ruthlessly, her firm attitude allowing for no misunderstanding.

Hua Shangmei's expression immediately turned unpleasant!

Wei Yuan watched satisfyingly from the side. He did not like the fellow, and now that Sister Bing had spoke so mercilessly, Wei Yuan felt an irrational sense of joy. "Hmph, for someone like Sister Bing, YC is of course the only suitor!" he thought.

The room was plunged into an awkward atmosphere. Just then, Deng Chong rushed into the room and yelled loudly, "Second Senior Brother, Senior Sister Bing, we have visitors! We have visitors!"

By then, Hua Shangmei had already gathered himself. Seeing Deng Chong all excited, he took the chance to change topic, "By your looks, I'd say they must be someone interesting!" Deng Chong was a combat enthusiast, and had always wanted to fight against other experts. His excited look was enough to let Hua Shangmei understand the situation.

"Hehe, you know me best, Second Senior Brother!" Deng Chong grinned, and said something else that brought new gravity to the situation, "The Zuo family from Tian Luo is also here!"

"What?" Hua Shangmei gasped. Rui Bing's eyes gleamed with sharp hostility!

Chapter 193: Brewing Storm VIII

The Zuo family of the Tian Luo galaxy was lesser known compared to the other aristocratic families of the same origin. However, when it came to their histories, the Zuo family had existed for about as long as the more famous aristocratic families. Besides, the Zuo family's reputation in the field of combat was unmatched by other aristocratic families. In the age where combat skills could determine the balance of power, the Zuo family had made their mark in history.

The most astounding fact was that, in every generation, the Zuo family would produce one or several talented characters, and never suffered from the problem of succession. This was envied by many other combat related aristocratic families. The Zuo family gradually became more and more mysterious in the eyes of society.

As the social status of combat slowly faded towards oblivion, the Zuo family became less of a presence in modern society. Soon, many had come to forget this mysterious aristocratic family.

That was why when Hua Shangmei and Rui Bing heard that the Zuo family of Tian Luo were here, they were very much surprised. Whether it was the Rui family or the Tian Hua dojo, both were mere infants compared to the long history of the Zuo family. Even the Lan family of September could not be compared to the Zuo family.

The Zuo family's unique combat techniques were difficult to determine, since every generation's representative offered his or her own unique combat styles.

What could the Zuo family of Tian Luo offer to this dying field of combat?

For some reason, the cold face of that young man who defeated her came to Rui Bing's mind. What level of attainment has he achieved now? Rui Bing wondered to herself.

Ye Chong's life could be said to be almost happy and peaceful, or at least, he felt that it was actually not bad. Besides the strange illness he had, he had nothing to complain of. Lan Yixing had not taught any new moves to him ever since that day, and only reminded Ye Chong to practice diligently whenever he met him. Ye Chong had no regrets. His combat skills had always been acceptable, and his rich experience in actual combat was unrivaled by the likes of Lan Yixing. Besides, most of his battles were to the death, and that had made him even stronger. In the end, combat was still a way of attacking and defending oneself. Now, Lan Yixing had opened the doors to a whole new world for him to discover.

On the one hand, Ye Chong was amazed by this new world, and on the other hand, he was eager to investigate and study this world with his own ideas. Of course, this was largely due to his habit of figuring things out by himself. Ye Chong now wanted for Lan Yixing to accept him as a student. He saw Lan Yixing as a part of this unknown and mysterious world. Besides, from Lan Yixing's demonstrations all this while, Ye Chong believed that he must have other powerful and secretive techniques. It was enough to hook his interest.

However, despite his interest, Ye Chong had no plans to put this into motion. Right now, he must lay low and avoid attention. After all, Black Cove must be waiting for him outside. Besides, his impulsive decision to finish off that mech last time must have attracted Black Cove's attention.

Ye Chong was not wrong. His actions had caused tension amongst Black Cove's men. This tension was noticed by the MPA and the Sanctuary, already aware of Black Cove's unusual movements recently. The Three Forces had, for some reason, unanimously decided not to alert the local authorities. Life on Windstar went on as usual, the tourists excited for their travels, unaware of that hidden tension beneath.

When Rui Bing set her eyes on the people from the Zuo family, it

was already lunch time.

Zuo Ling was a large man, his athletic body was matched with keen eyes that look as though they could penetrate anyone he set his eyes on. His half exposed chest showed solid muscles. His palm was wide and strong, framed with an edge of calluses. The wild and confident expression on his face, coupled with a half-smile, was sure to attract many a good beautiful ladies.

On his chest hung a black pendant, and Hua Shangmei recognized from his familiarity in mech combat that it was a dimension keystone. In the dining hall, Rui Bing was the only who did not realize this. Combat experts rarely had a dimension keystone with them, and since Tian Hua dojo was currently putting efforts into developing mech combat techniques, Hua Shangmei and others were exposed to these modern elements.

Could this Zuo Ling also be skilled in mech combat?

Wei Yuan did not think much of them. To him, no one was a match for YC in mech combat. Wei Yuan managed to secure a place at the dining table due to Rui Bing. He had decided to stay near Sister Bing at all times, as she was his only link to YC. Unless the situation demanded it, he would never give up. Fortunately, Sister Bing was willing to indulge him, or he would have to return home.

Zuo Ling's arrival was treated with wariness by Hua Tiankai and others. An uninvited guest, and one from the Zuo family at that - how could one not feel wary? However, Hua Tiankai and his students were not just your average people, and welcomed the visitor with extended courtesies.

Zuo Ling may look arrogant, but his demeanor suggested an open mind and forthrightness.

"As expected, Mr Zuo is an expert!" Deng Zhong bowed to Zou Ling. He had lost uneventfully against the oppressive combat style of Zuo Ling. Deng Chong was straightforward in nature, and showed fine sportsmanship despite his loss.

"You're too kind!" Deng Chong's demeanor also won Zuo Ling's approval.

Hua Shangmei and Zheng Zhongxing could only stare in disbelief. Deng Chong's loss was acceptable for them, but they could not accept how Deng Chong was completely overwhelmed in his defeat, without even a chance for retaliation. They exchanged a horrified glance. Deng Chong was the best of the three of them, and if his match ended like this, it would be in vain for them to take up the challenge.

Was the Zuo family really that powerful?

Rui Bing still wore her cold expression, but her eyes were now glowing brightly. She was of course far more skilled than the three students of Hua Tiankai. She was certain that this man, Zuo Ling had attained "Jie". He was the youngest she had ever met to have reached this level besides herself.

"Jie" was attained when a combat expert had surpassed the traditional boundaries of combat. These Jie experts had skills unrivalled by average combat experts, and they no longer rely solely on physical strength. Jie masters were the true experts amongst combat experts.

Jie experts were a mystery in the world of combat. As the field slowly faded into history, fewer and fewer combat experts reached this level of attainment. The power of Jie experts was also exaggerated by the public as almost invincible characters. However, Rui Bing dismissed those rumors. When she first met Ye Chong, she had just only attained "Jie", but was still beaten by Ye Chong. Of course, that was mainly because she was new to this mysterious world, and her unfamiliarity with what her body was truly capable of.

Strength was not absolute! She realized this from experience. From then on, she improved herself even faster.

Similarly unfazed was Hua Tiankai. His constant expression

betrayed none of his thoughts.

A thin, black threadworm wandered around in the virtual world. Passcode protected doors did nothing to stop its advance, since it could easily wriggle through the locks and enter the photon processor hyperlinked to the virtual world.

It browsed casually through the photon processor records, and suddenly gasped in surprise. The holographic recording before it was of Ye Chong's training. If Wei Yuan was here, he would have found that the photon processor was actually his!

YC was a name that went viral recently, and anyone who had spent some time in the virtual world would quickly become aware of the name. He was no exception. As an elite Maverick, he was more familiar with the virtual world than the average person. However, he was not interested in mechs, and so was never interested in this character.

The recording before him, however, seemed to have renewed his interest. There was only one latest holographic recording of YC, the one that was on Richie. Here was another recording that was never leaked out. Could the owner of this photon processor be YC?

YC was very much a legend in the virtual world, rising into fame in just a few years, and recently, becoming even more popular. This was a rarity. The virtual world changed at a rapid pace, and new personalities were often quickly forgotten over time. Sustaining a reputation for more than two or three years was more than uncommon.

He was quickly disappointed by his findings. The owner of the photon processor was only a fan of YC. Nonetheless, finding the real identity of a virtual world user was not too hard for him. Besides, it was made easier by the fact that the probability of YC being a Maverick was very small.

It was undeniable that mech piloting and photon processors were entirely different fields. In today's world, the depths of every field

was enough to occupy a lifetime, and few would ever wanted to study in two completely unrelated fields. Even if such a person existed, the probability of this person mastering both fields was as unlikely as a planet being hit by a deadly asteroid. Since YC was an outstanding mech pilot, it was almost a certainty that he was not a Maverick.

First, he thought of going through the MPA's database.

The MPA's passcodes were ineffective against him, and he accessed their systems without difficulty. Such ease of access was still enough to make him, after all his trials and tribulations, pleased with himself. The MPA's seemingly impenetrable fortress was just like home to him.

His success was mainly due to his unique calculations. His creative calculations allowed him to change his body size. From his initial appearance a hairy caterpillar, years of careful considerations and calculations finally allowed him to compress his appearance into an impossibly thin black threadworm. This was also the best result he obtained after numerous calculations. While it was not the ideal invisible presence he had expected, it was enough to satisfy him.

This state of presence of allowed him great freedom in the virtual world. No one could detect his presence, and the apparently watertight passcode protected doors were nothing to him. He had used his calculations to benefit from the virtual world, such as serving the group that he was a part of now. If not for his powerful skills as a Maverick, he would never be able to join the group, or even obtain the position that he had now.

However, he was greatly surprised to find that the MPA had no information on YC.

He was now feeling exceptionally nervous.

What did this mean? It meant that YC was very possibly a Maverick, or a friend of one. No matter the possibility, it was bad

news for him. Besides, the other party could use an NR Training Center without registering. He was almost certain that he was looking at a very powerful Maverick.

In the virtual world, investigating a person's identity in the real world was taboo, and among the Mavericks, it was a sure sign of provocation. As an experienced Maverick, he was familiar with all these unwritten rules.

However, he was not exactly afraid. He was at least confident of his own powers. It was just that the matter was becoming complicated, since his sudden curiosity had now caused hostility between him and another powerful Maverick. It was not a pleasant business.

Nonetheless, the events had progressed to this point, and he could only let it go and discontinue his probing.

Ye Chong was practicing in his room. His daily routine had become fixed, with time allocated for meditation and combat practice, followed by cleaning the training grounds, and then returning to his room for some alchemy. It was too bad that the room was a little too small for him to practice mech maneuvering.

Shang's silence was welcomed by Ye Chong. Ever since Ye Chong installed a miniature pulsed signal device under Shang's instructions one night in one of the houses near the dojo, Shang had spent of his much in the virtual world. This resulted in a peaceful environment for Ye Chong.

Ye Chong was counting the days until when Wang Weixing returned. Once he was back, he would find the doctor and cure his sickness, then he would travel to a planet where no one knew him and live a careful life, doing things that interested him. It would be such a carefree life.

Not daring to head outside, Ye Chong knew nothing of what was happening out there. He believed that staying in his room was the best option for the moment.

"Hmph!" Suddenly, the long silent Shang humphed coldly with a deadly undertone, enough to startle even Ye Chong. Ye Chong stopped what he was doing and asked, "What is it? Shang!"

Chapter 194: Brewing Storm IX

"Ye, someone's investigating you! And he's good at what he does." Shang's sinister voice was very different from usual.

What was with Shang? Ye Chong asked carefully, "Shang, what's with you?"

"Humph, that d*mned b*stard, to play his tricks when I'm around. He's too arrogant, does he think I'm so easy to bully?" Shang's cold voice quickly turned exasperated.

So that was it! This tone was more like Shang's. Ye Chong continued on with what he was doing and said casually, "Shang, then you should take care of him!"

"Hehe, you know me best, Ye!" Shang was pleased. "Humph, while my computations are not as good as Mu's, but in other aspects, hehe ... If this guy wants to show off in front of me, then he's found the wrong target!" Shang spoke his last sentence haughtily.

Ye Chong did not feel like pitying the guy. It was just his bad luck! Shang was usually happy-go-lucky, and may seem careless, but Ye Chong never doubted his abilities. While he may not be as powerful as Mu in terms of computations, Shang was a master in the art non-physical sciences such as psychology. The methods of threatening that he shared with Ye Chong and that entire scheme with the Sanctuary's starship were all meticulously woven plans.

Mu behaved like a typical PSI, but was more powerful than others. He possessed the trademark rationality and computation-heavy mindset typical of PSIs. Shang, however, completely overhauled Ye Chong's concept of PSIs. He was irrational, less competent in computations, but extremely well versed in non-logical areas like emotions and psychology. It was definitely an odd PSI.

In any case, one could be sure that Mu and Shang were both very powerful.

Powerful characters typically could not stand having their authority challenged. This behavior was clearly present in Mu and Shang.

"Just be mindful of what you're doing!" Ye Chong said impartially, and continued with his practice.

Zuo Ling looked at Rui Bing openly with fiery eyes.

To think that this ice-cold lady was actually a Jie expert like himself! A Jie expert at such a young age was incredible. He had received strict training from the Zuo family since young, and his natural physique allowed him to attain Jie at such a young age. If not for the Zuo family's resources, his achievements would only be just a dream. For a 26-year-old to attain Jie was a remarkable feat, even back in the old days when combat was popular.

Today, however, he had seen someone even younger than him, a Jie expert that came from an unheard of family. The Rui family? He was certain that it was not any one of the combat based aristocratic families with long histories; he had never even heard of this family before. What surprised him the most was that this Jie expert was actually a woman!

The female body was relatively limited compared to a man's in terms of combat, and this limitation could only ever be removed by attaining Jie, since Jie experts no longer rely solely on physical strength in combat. However, without years of efforts, it was difficult to attain Jie. Based on the existing records of combat history, female Jie experts were few and far in between.

Her icy smooth charm and dignified manner was wrapped up in a white training garb that fluttered slightly in the wind. Her snow white skin was flawless, and her long, dark hair flowed down smoothly like a waterfall. Her faint red lips hid a certain warmth beneath. Her calm gaze was like a creek flowing through the

glaciers, silent and chillingly unapproachable.

Zuo Ling was certain that he had never felt such desire, a desire to wrap her in his arms and melt her with his burning embrace! Zuo Ling was not a stranger to women; on the contrary, he had met and reciprocated countless of them. However, the icy woman before him was the first who had ever let him feel this way.

Zuo Ling's open stare was vexing for Rui Bing. She humped coldly, pouring cold water on Zuo Ling's feelings. He immediately gathered himself, and when he looked at Rui Bing's leaving figure, the only thought that crossed his mind was this - Rui Bing, you must be mine! Zuo Ling fisted his hands tightly.

Hua Shangmei, Deng Chong and Zheng Zhongxing stared in stupefaction. They never imagined that the fragile looking Senior Sister Bing would be so powerful! Perhaps even their master would not be a match against her. In the friendly match earlier, Rui Bing had tied with Zuo Ling.

Hua Tiankai looked at Rui Bing's retreating figure and felt happy for his friend who had passed away, but also felt shame when he thought of how his three students had performed.

Rui Bing sat alone in her room, her eyes on the clear water in her glass, but her heart was elsewhere. She could see his figure reflected in the water, looking calmly at her. For a moment, she felt lost in her feelings.

"Where are you?" Rui Bing murmured ever so softly to herself.

Ye Chong continued his practice, going through his dull routines every day. Shang, on the other hand, looked like he was up to something, busying himself with things.

Abruptly, Shang spoke to Ye Chong, "Ye, go to the virtual world!"

"Virtual world? What happened?" Ye Chong was baffled. Besides, where could he find a hyperlink helmet?

Shang continued to hasten him, and Ye Chong could only deploy

Shang in the room. The room was small, and Shang could only curl into himself into an odd position.

"Strange, what's with Shang today?" Ye Chong could not understand him. Usually, he would never submit to curling himself up like this. Why was he asking for it this time?

Ye Chong wandered as he opened Shang's pilot cabin and entered. On the trash planet, Ye Chong had used Mu and Shang's piloting helmet as a virtual world hyperlink. While it was nothing fancy, its functionalities were enough to make anyone envious.

Long deprived of the virtual world, Ye Chong felt a little excited.

His vision transformed, and Ye Chong found himself staring at a holographic feed. It showed a very thin black worm moving very quickly. At the side were a few other inset images of the black thread from multiple angles.

Shang laughed. "Hehe, Ye, that's the guy investigating you!"

"Him?" Ye Chong pointed at the moving black thread, flabbergasted.

Shang was obviously satisfied with Ye Chong's expression. "Yes, him!" He explained, "This guy used a unique way of calculation that made his appearance turn into a black threadworm."

Seeing Ye Chong's confused expression, Shang could not help but chastise, "Sigh, how could I forget that you know nothing about photon processors, that I would explain to you in those terms? This is surely my biggest mistake of the day!" Shang's exaggerating manner made Ye Chong smile.

"What's the use of this appearance?" Ye Chong had always asked when he could not understand something.

"It allows the worm to pass through most passcode protected doors, and avoids attention. Tsk tsk, the guy's a genius, I'll give him that, this degree of creativity must have been hard for him. Hmm, the calculations are carefully made, and the improvements

are good. Unfortunately, he has met me!" Shang's haughty tone made him sound like a villain.

It would definitely be very difficult to explain to Ye Chong what it meant to be a villain. However, Shang's compliments to the guy made Ye Chong become wary of him. After all, he knew that it was not easy to squeeze out any good words out of Shang. This, he knew from experience.

Shang continued laughing connivingly. "Hehe, I found him just a few days ago, however, I don't want to alert him. This guy must have sensed something, as he's more vigilant recently. Hehe, while it's easy to destroy his appearance there and then, but such an interesting fellow is hard to find, it'll be such a shame to finish him off so fast!

"So, I followed him, and just now, it's that door over there, you see? I placed some tracking larvae on it, hehe, those things are much smaller than him, and very hard to detect. It's something Mu came up with ..." Here, Shang seemed to realize that he had misspoke, and laughed it off before continuing, "Anyway, I can now follow his every movement. You see, he's heading back right now!"

As expected, in the holographic feed, the black thread was heading towards the dark opening of a very large door.

"Tsk tsk, I don't know who created this door, but it is sure amazing. If not for this guy leading us through, it will be hard for us to enter without alerting them." Shang offered another round of compliments.

"It seemed that the other party is really strong," Ye Chong thought to himself. He stared at the holographic feed, the image suddenly morphing as they went through the door. Unexpectedly, what was beyond was a jungle, an endless stretch of greenery. In truth, it was almost refreshing to see something that could only be found on some untouched planets.

"A multiarray matrix firewall?" Shang gasped in surprise.

"What's this thing?" Ye Chong could not understand at all. However, based on Shang's tone, he figured that this must be something incredible.

"It's good stuff, rarely do people use this kind of calculation. It's very complicated, even Mu might have a hard time if we want to break through it with brute force!" Shang grew excited. "Ye, looks like we've got ourselves a big one!"

The black threadworm was apparently very familiar with the territory, making its way through the forest without hesitation.

"Hehe, Ye, do you see that? That green-black grass, yes, the one with serrated edges, if anyone touched it, it will immediately activate at least 20 levels of authentication verification. If you're determined to be an enemy, then you're done for!" Shang then pointed to the numerous red fruits hanging from the trees in the holographic feed, vivid and enticing.

"Ye, these may look very appealing, but they're nasty stuff. These torrent soursops are linked to each other. If you activated one of them, the rest of the fruits will all explode. Hehe, the torrents of signal pulses that follow will be so painful it will scar you for life. But that's not the scariest of all, no, you see those thin vines? Yes, the ones with many tentacles on it. The pulse torrents would affect your real body by stimulating your brain, and these olfactory vines would then use those pulses to find you in the real world, which is where you are right now. Hehe, as for the consequences, I'll leave that to your imagination!" Shang pointed out each of those threats to Ye Chong.

Ye Chong could feel a chill running down his spine.

Chapter 195: Brewing Storm X

The black threadworm's body was malleable and surprisingly agile, and it moved very quickly. It was obvious that he moved more boldly once he passed the black door. He never would have guessed that his every move was monitored by someone else. He was familiar with the territory here, and believed that there would be no more than three Mavericks who could find their way through the traps without tripping any of them.

"Hehe, it's good that we have him as a guide, or we'll never pass through here safely. I can't imagine anyone but Mu achieving just that. The inside man is always the hardest to defend against. This guy is most certainly involved with the designs of the trap algorithms around here. Hehe, that's quite fortunate for us!" Shang said, pleased.

The myriads of trap algorithms involved were enough to puzzle Ye Chong. They were all hidden under beautiful exteriors, and by using these traps in creative combinations, their effectiveness was greatly increased. The more they looked harmless in the background, the more likely they were to be triggered by the enemy. Who would have thought that such a beautiful scenery was a cover for all sorts of fatal threats?

"What is this place? The security is so tight!" Shang's words betrayed his curiosity towards this mysterious place. Even Ye Chong, who usually thought it dull to uncover other people's secrets, was eager to find out the story behind this place.

Beyond the beautiful forest, the scenery expanded into a wide plain. A stream zigzagged across the plain, but what flowed was not water - it was a silver, viscous liquid with suspended particles twinkling like stars as the river flowed slowly along its path.

"Di micropulses?" Shang could not help another gasp.

What was this thing? Without any knowledge in photon

processors, Ye Chong could only listen in puzzlement. The black threadworm plunged headfirst into the river without hesitation.

Knowing Ye Chong's ignorance, Shang explained patiently, "Di micropulses are a kind of very mild flow of pulses, harmless to the human body, and any character in the virtual world. However, it can assimilate a wide spectrum of pulsed signals." Shang could not resist expressing his admiration. "To think that someone would use Di micropulses in this way, genius! In the virtual world, almost all tracking devices rely on weak but continuous pulse signals to determine the target's location. Di micropulses can not only assimilate these tracking signals, but also interrupt and damage the structure of the tracking device. It's very much like a sterilizer, only it's not for germs, but for tracking devices."

"Oh, I see!"

"It's too bad that you don't understand these things. Sigh, to have you as a witness to all these good stuff, the designer must be disappointed." Shang mocked Ye Chong before continuing "The designer is a genius! To use Di micropulses in this way, it's incredible!"

However, Shang immediately affected a sinister smile. "Hehe, it's really too bad, Mu's tracking larvae are not your usual trackers! The probability of getting rid of those larvae is too small!"

As Shang predicted, when the black threadworm plunged into the river, the holographic feed shook violently, but resumed to normal after three seconds.

Shang said, "Looks like Mu's work is always the best!"

Beneath the surface, the view was entirely different. The opaque silver was now a semi-transparent gray, clear as crystal. The twinkling particles moved like they were alive, chasing after each other, vanishing and appearing again, clustering and spreading out, bringing life to the quiet silver river.

The black threadworm swam in the river without hindrance, moving quickly through the liquid.

It did not surface, but continued along the edge of the river. After some time, the threadworm stopped abruptly and began to dive. The river did not seem very wide, but it went down deep, as they did not reach the riverbed for a long time. The view in the river, however, changed little by little. The tiny grain-sized particles were now as large as a thumb, and did not seem as lively as their smaller counterparts.

The black threadworm stopped again. He paused for a moment before swimming towards the edge of the river. As they approached the wall that contained the river, Ye Chong saw a tiny crack in the wall. The black threadworm wriggled into the crack without hesitation.

"Sigh, nothing in this world is perfect!" Looking at the crack, Shang seemed to deeply moved.

The crack did not extend much further. Soon, they reached the end, and saw light ahead of them.

The holographic feed suddenly opened up to the insides of a room. This crack seemed to connect the room and the river they saw earlier.

Once in the room, the black threadworm's body began to transform, quickly expanding from its thread-like thinness into the size of an adult human. The effect was much like an elastic straw suddenly filled with air. In any case, it was an odd process.

Just then, the black object suddenly twisted and began to change its colors. When Ye Chong could finally see it clearly, the holographic feed was already showing a man in a black outfit.

Ye Chong gaped at the transformation.

"This expansion calculation is child's play, nothing to boast about, unlike those calculations earlier, this is just embarrassing!"

Shang spoke with disdain.

The man looked around him and muttered to himself, "Was it just my imagination? No one's following? Sigh, I must be getting paranoid."

Mu's larvae were very useful, channeling even the slightest voices clearly.

The man in black began walking to his desk.

"Huh, that guy can actually sense that someone is following him, not bad!" Shang seemed to be surprised with the man's vigilance.

"As I expected, inner security is lax compared to the outer security measures. Compared to the outside, this place is totally undefended. Sigh, such is human psychology!" Shang shook his head.

"Shouldn't security be tighter on the inside than outside?" Ye Chong asked.

Shang explained, "It's actually quite easy to understand. Their setup outside is actually quite advanced. Normally, if someone can break through the security outside, then it only makes sense that they can also plough through the security inside. After all, the probability of someone hitching a ride in like us is very small. Besides, there must be many people working here. Without those trap algorithms, the workers here could be more at ease. Ye, in this world, if you can break the strongest point of something, then that thing would be yours!"

"I see!" Ye Chong nodded, understanding him.

"Hehe, let's check out what's in this place!" Shang was back to his old carefree self, and Ye Chong could not help but smile at Shang's enthusiasm.

The larvae silently left the man in black. Shang was now more interested in the place than the man himself.

"This is probably a top secret data center in the virtual world, most likely the database center for some organization. From the set up outside, those obstacles were designed not only to prevent outsiders from entering, but also to stop any internal signals from leaking out. If that guy had not found the crack in the river, the probability of someone discovering this place was close to nil. Usually, a place like this would have classified information!" Shang's calmness made Ye Chong feel as though it was Mu he was talking to.

Ye Chong suddenly thought of something. "Then why do they want to use the virtual world?"

Shang explained, "Well, if the head of the organisation does not want to reveal his true identity to his employees, but must personally direct the inner workings, this would be an excellent option."

The holographic feed changed again. Shang had already hacked their system, and right now, it was like an undefended city. Soon, he acquired the highest access rights to the place.

"I see!" Shang muttered to himself.

"What is it?" Ye Chong asked keenly, trying to keep up with situation.

"They're secretly building warships!" Shang explained casually.

"Oh, warships, no wonder they're so secretive," Ye Chong replied with similar lightness. For the average person, this was definitely news of earth-shattering importance. To both of them, however, with their experience in dealing with a warship themselves, the news was not much of a surprise.

"Officially, they're a massive group that produce mechs, the Prometheus Group, which also produces the Matte mech series. Ye, you must be familiar with this series. The main purpose of this place is as an information center, and the people here are mainly

responsible for its security. Tsk tsk, the warship plans are deplorable, compared to the MPA's Twin Moon Corvette, theirs suck. Er, there are also some classified documents here. Sigh, as expected, I say, the manager here is too reckless, murdering the person that was the backbone of their organization, it's no wonder their technical expertise is so inadequate right now. Poor man, that Gao Shichang, to be set up and murdered like that!" Shang shook his head.

"Gao Shichang?" Ye Chong jerked like he was struck by lightning, and felt blood rushing to his head. "What did you say? Shang, say that again!" Ye Chong hoarse and low voice was overwhelmed with emotions.

Shang was obviously shocked. "Ye, what's with you? Do you feel uncomfortable somewhere? Is it another episode?"

"Shang, say that again!" Ye Chong growled lowly like a beast cornering his prey.

Shang could not understand, and could only do as he was told. "They're cover is Prometheus ..."

"Not that, what you said later!" Ye Chong cut Shang off rudely.

"The one about Gao Shichang being set up?" Shang asked Ye Chong, perplexed.

"Gao Shichang ... Gao Shichang ... Gao Shichang ..." Ye Chong muttered quietly to himself, his eyes glowing with reminiscence as bits and pieces of his life on the trash planet became clearer and clearer in his mind, the clearest of which was the thin, gentle figure who liked to see him smile.

"You know Gao Shichang?" Shang asked, surprised.

"Gao Shichang ... Gao Shichang ..." Ye Chong muttered, "Papa is called Gao Shichang ..."

"Ah!" It was Shang's turn to gasp in surprise. When he and Mu got to know Ye Chong, he was already living by himself. They only

knew that Ye Chong had a father, but did not know that his name was Gao Shichang.

"Papa was set up and murdered! Papa was set up and murdered!"

That phrase repeated itself over and over in Ye Chong's mind. His usually rock solid heart was now throbbing with pain.

"Ah, Ye, get out right now, someone's coming!" Shang urged.

Ye Chong was lost in his thoughts, and did not seem to hear the mech.

Shang panicked. "Ye, get out of there now! Or you'll be found out!" Seeing Ye Chong still in a trance, Shang slowed down and said, "Ye, don't think too much about it, didn't Papa and you lived together for years? His death was something you witnessed, maybe it's just a coincidence!"

Shang's words brought Ye Chong out of his trance. Indeed, he had lived with Papa for years and years, and had buried the man himself. Perhaps it was just a case of two people sharing the same name.

Shang hastened him. "Ye, get out right now, if you're discovered, all our efforts will be wasted. I will find out everything about your Papa, so don't worry, Mu will also help out. Besides, even if you want revenge for your Papa, let's first deal with the current situation!"

Ye Chong had already mostly recovered from his initial shock. As he calmed down and began to think, he found himself agreeing with Shang. Whatever the truth was, he should first deal with the current ordeal.

Once he decided, Ye Chong hesitated no further. He pushed himself up and out of his seat, and bounced off his seat like a monkey. At the same time, the pilot's cabin door opened up, Mu and Shang cooperating with him seamlessly. The ceiling grew nearer and nearer and, just as he was about to hit the ceiling, Ye

Chong gave a gentle push with his hands against the ceiling. His arms bent at the elbows like springs, and straightened again!

Ye Chong rode with the momentum and landed at an even higher speed. He withdrew Shang even before his feet touched the ground. Just as he landed, Ye Chong contracted his abdominal muscles and bent down, landing on all fours like a cat, and just as silently.

Ye Chong stood up just when the door to his room opened.

Chapter 196: Brewing Storm XI

The one who entered was Lan Yixing. Lan Yixing took a look at Ye Chong and said, "Mo Fei, come with me." He then left the room.

"Okay." Ye Chong replied and followed. Ye Chong was still distracted by the information he just found out. Lan Yixing noticed his usually steady apprentice's demeanor and was quite surprised.

"What happened?" Lan Yixing may have asked calmly, but one could read the concern in his tone. In truth, Lan Yixing was satisfied with this student of his - hardworking without complaint, and diligent in his training. While his innate talent was lacking, quite a ways from Lan Yixing's ideal student, he understood that talent was not something one could control.

If he continued training like this, his effort would make up for it. Lan Yixing believed that this student of his would succeed him and pass down his skills. As for whether he could attain Jie, that was up to faith. After all, the path towards attaining Jie depended not only on effort, but also on luck and innate talent.

"Nothing." Ye Chong replied dismissively, still occupied with his thoughts. His mind was still in a whirl. The new information had delivered a heavy blow to him. Compared to his new discovery, the MPA and Black Cove had nothing on it!

Fortunately, Ye Chong had good self control, and managed to maintain his basic rationale despite the situation.

Lan Yixing saw that Ye Chong did not wish to share his thoughts, and did not pursue further, only adding, "If you have any issues that you can't solve alone, let me know."

Ye Chong nodded, and felt his heart warmed up. Based on Shang and Mu's investigation, Lan Yixing had a good relationship with the local authorities, so he could actually do something for Ye Chong if needed. However, Ye Chong's problem was one that he

could not help with. Besides, if Papa was really framed and murdered, Ye Chong would take care of it himself. He was confident in his abilities to do at least that much.

Lan Yixing headed outwards without a word, and Ye Chong did not question him, the two men occupied with their own thoughts.

When Ye Chong came to, he found himself out in the open on the streets, amongst pedestrians. Ye Chong paused, startled. Heavens, how did he arrive here on the streets?

The streets was not a good place for Ye Chong at the moment. From his last encounter with Black Cove's Cosmic Flare, he understood that Black Cove was determined to get him this time. To think that Black Cove would openly search the streets for him against their usual secretive nature. It was a real possibility for him to see Black Cove mechs on the streets at any time.

Shang's warning had him drenched in cold sweat.

"Ye, careful, 45 degrees from the radius vector, 20 kilometers from here, there are two MPA mechs, Messengers."

Ye Chong felt his muscles tensed up. If anything went wrong, he would deploy Guardian and get the hell out of there.

However, Shang's next warning made Ye Chong pale. "Ye, careful, 77 degrees from the radius vector, 23 kilometers from here, there are two Sanctuary mechs, Dawns."

Ye Chong nearly stumbled. Heavens, he was running out of luck today.

Shang reminded him, "Ye, relax, you'll get noticed if you're too nervous. They probably haven't found you yet."

Ye Chong heaved a breath of relief at Shang's words.

However, Shang immediately followed up urgently with words that filled Ye Chong with a sense of foreboding, "Ye, careful 35 kilometers straight ahead, two of Black Cove's Cosmic Flares are

coming this way."

Ye Chong was ready to deploy Han Jia now. Now that the threat was well defined, Ye Chong became calmer somehow. His face betrayed no fear or uncertainty, only his pulse quickened slightly, not out of fear, but of excitement at the imminent battle!

"Hmph, these mechs are not enough to contain me!" He thought. However, he also knew that once he engaged with these mechs, he would also be the target of the formidable backup force that came with them. As for whether the mechs from the Three Forces would take turns or work together in engaging him, that was no longer an important concern.

He knew that if he could not even handle these mechs, he would not stand a chance.

Shang suddenly spoke up, "Ye, calm down."

"What?" Ye Chong asked, but he was already relaxing inside. Even if Shang was usually a barrel of laughs, he would never joke in these situations.

Shang spoke with some uncertainty, "Ye, they are probably not working together." Then, as though he figured out something, Shang continued excitedly, "Yes, they are not working together. I say, they all seem to be on high alert. Hehe, Ye, they must have noticed each other hehe, get ready for showtime. We might be able to see a battle between the Three Forces."

A battle between the Three Forces was filled with uncertainties. None of the mech pilots would act hastily to trigger it. Their understanding of every other party's skills and weaknesses were enough to make them wary of each other.

The command section from each of the three parties received their reports at roughly the same time, and issued the same command to retreat.

This was the first time the Three Forces encountered each other

directly on Windstar.

Of the three commanding officers, the one who was most troubled was Hak. They had lost one mech without knowing who the culprit was. With two of the Cosmic Flares safely returned, he felt consoled slightly. The situation on Windstar was turning complicated quickly. Maintaining the strength of his forces was the only way to secure his power on the planet, and not be the first of the Three Forces to retreat.

Just then, the holographic news flash on his desk reported, "At 9 o'clock this morning, we will witness the opening of the largest martial arts tournament in the history of Windstar. What you're watching now is a traditional martial art performance. This classical demonstration reminds us of the glorious days past when traditional martial art flourished ..."

"Martial arts?" Hak twisted his lip in disdain. How could those flowery moves be considered as combat moves? It was his belief that Black Cove was the only true combat expert. The skills he picked up in the past at that place were enough to make anyone in the Five Galaxies envious! Perhaps, that was the only place that could give birth to real combat experts! While he was only allowed three weeks of training there, it was now difficult to find any opponents worthy of his attention. Hak felt a sudden wave of emotions - how could these people understand the true strength of Black Cove?

Looking at the performances in the holographic feed, Hak felt like he was only watching a bunch of clowns on stage, and turned off the holographic news flash out of disgust. The media only knew to exaggerate, and was not worthy of his time. He should focus on planning for the situation at hand, and not watching a bunch of clowns.

The martial arts tournament was only briefly covered in the holographic news flash, an indication of just how removed martial arts was from society. "Combat expert" was an unfamiliar term to

most people, an almost archaic occupation. Compared to the annual mech pilot tournament, this was barely worth mentioning.

However, in the world of combat, the event was momentous.

Most of the older generation in the world of combat could not remember the last time such a grand tournament was held. The organizer this time was the Tian Hua dojo. Invitation was delivered not only to almost all dojos on Windstar, but also to famous combat experts on other planets. The tournament was organized with unprecedented splendor, but it still could not hide the awkward fact of the art's decline.

Ye Chong sighed in relief as the mechs from the Three Forces retreated. Lan Yixing continued forward without stopping.

Ye Chong could only follow him and hope that they would reach their destination quickly, finish their business and return to the dojo as soon as possible. Wandering outside made him nervous. He tried to guess Lan Yixing's intentions in bringing him outdoors, but could not make neither head nor tail of it. In the end, he gave up and settled on simply following Lan Yixing.

"Huh, is this not the way to Tian Hua dojo?"

He went there with Hua Shangmei last time, and now Ye Chong's excellent sense of direction reminded him of the fact.

"Shang, why do you think he's going to the Tian Hua dojo?" Ye Chong chatted with Shang, unwilling to dwell on the issue regarding Papa. This was not the time to be distracted, and Ye Chong must be prepared for any eventuality.

"Hehe, I know why, but I'm not telling!" Shang laughed cunningly, filling Ye Chong with dread.

Ye Chong kept quiet. Usually, Shang would give in to temptation and tell in the end. This time, however, Shang seemed quite determined and said nothing more, laughing devilishly all the while Ye Chong felt increasingly nervous. Nonetheless, Shang's

antic successfully distracted Ye Chong away from thoughts of his Papa.

Tian Hua dojo looked very different now. It was redecorated with vintage motives, bringing its visitors one large step back in time. A large holographic screen was affixed on top of the main entrance, showing a youth in white demonstrating a series of combat moves, his movements natural like flowing water, a harmonious blend of ying and yang, incorporating beauty and strength.

Wasn't that Hua Shangmei? Ye Chong recognized the man in white garb instantly.

Hua Shangmei was a handsome man, and now looked even more elegant and dashing. In the holographic display were also a crowd of ladies watching Hua Shangmei with mesmerized eyes, occasionally squealing in excitement.

The students of Tian Hua dojo stood in two lines before the main entrance with discipline, all dressed in white. Hua Tiankai's eldest student, Zheng Zhongxing stood by the door and smiled as he greeted the visiting combat experts. There was another door at the side for the audience. Anyone would enter and watch the performances and matches for free.

Ye Chong was developing a headache just by watching the large crowd. It was not that he never encountered grand events like this, but this was the worst possible moment to get involved.

Somehow, Shang's devilish laughter seemed to suggest something else beyond that crowd. The mech only laughed, pleased with himself.

Chapter 197: Brewing Storm XII

The saving grace was how Lan Yixing was a mere owner of a mere dojo to the eyes of the public. His title of "Lan family of September" would only be effective to one who was well-aware of its existence like Rui Bing. The hospitality Lan Yixing received was not as great, and could be said was a total mismatch to his strength. He was naturally a person of low-profile however and that would be helpful for he was very much prepared this time, striving to bombard the crowd towards the end of the tournament to grab their attention, the later the stronger the effect.

As the participation was overwhelming and had gone beyond Hua Tiankai's expectation, helplessly he also opened up the training room right next to the reception hall to accommodate the guests. Lan Yixing on the other hand, led Ye Chong to sit at one quiet corner of the hall.

"Shang, so this is the tournament between martial artists?" asked Ye Chong as he was left with an impression that Shang had somehow mentioned something like a fighting tournament on Windstar before.

"Mhm," replied Shang.

Frankly speaking, Ye Chong was still a little intrigued of this mentioned tournament. After witnessing the capabilities of Lan Yixing, Ye Chong no longer held even a bit of disdain towards the martial arts practitioners from the 5 major galaxies. Imagining the fearsome dragons and tigers lurking in this hall, Ye Chong could tell some of them could be potentially on par with the experts at Black Coves.

Ye Chong was also highly confident of his learning ability, considering that with the involvement at the tournament this time, one could tell the speeding up benefits for his skills.

There were uninvited guests from the other planets, the dojo

owner realized that and would like to express his respect towards them, as he called over one man to break the wall between the reception hall and the temporary hall. One buffed man with a tanned face offered his help proactively, one fist landed to the wall and it began cracking like a spider web, which soon collapsed into countless specks, piling a tiny ruin.

The punch had won over the thunderous applause of the entire hall.

"Such an attention seeker," disdained Shang. "You even want to flaunt wall-breaking? Ye, his punch is even worse than the one you did last time. Man, talking about beginners, they have seen nothing." That punch Shang quoted was from the time when Ye Chong broke the metallic gate in a spaceship barehanded. With his current strength, he was hardly interested in such a performer's kind of behavior. Similarly, Lan Yixing who shared the same impression, carried on sipping that cup of tea he had been sipping since forever.

Well, that very punch made by that tanned face man obviously had stirred the emotion of the crowds, giving them expectation towards the tournament this time.

Both Lan Yixing and Ye Chong sat at the corner. They recognized nobody from the crowd. They put up their ultimate straight face. No doubt, nobody would bother to take the initiative to talk to them. Meanwhile, Hua Tiankai, being the host of the tournament, had become busier than the bees, more occupied than the waiter at the restaurant where Ye Chong was in, of course he would not remember Lan Yixing being there.

"Hah!" Shang shrieked excitedly, "I knew it!"

"What?" asked Ye Chong in confusion.

"What else? It's Bing! Bing! Your Bing Bing yeah! Ye, move your eyes to the table at the center, what did you see over there? Did you see it? Wow, B-i-n-g-B-i-n-g..." The flooding excitement

seemed to have jammed his audio-producing system... Ye Chong seriously hoped that.

His heart pumped hard once, as the silhouette of her wavy white garb flashed in his head. Well that was just one hard pump. Shang had already informed him the name of the girl being Rui Bing. What has Rui Bing to do with me though? That was the first thought sprouting in his head.

Nonetheless, the admiration lingered. Her standard of combats, her spirit of perseverance, and her demureness of posture, in that grace of eternity, those had left impressions in him.

He glanced at the direction of Rui Bing. That girl in her white garb was still her old self. Her posture on the seat did not even change, although that Wei Yuan by her side was a tiny surprise to him.

Speaking of Wei Yuan, he had been a headache to Hua Tiankai and his apprentices, for he had been somehow glued to Rui Bing since ages. It was Rui Bing who accepted his entry out of sympathy for his young age and pitiful look. She took good care of him. Wei Yuan had been staying with his father back when he was much younger, certainly he would have never experienced that nurturing aspect of a family. Towards Rui Bing's motherly care, he was touched, thus his obedience day by day. They gradually grew on each other and Wei Yuan even requested Rui Bing to be his sister at one point, well, she nodded her head happily.

Rui Bing immediately discovered his role in this brother-and-sister relationship for somehow Wei Yuan detected her distastefulness towards those guys under Hua Tiankai. As soon as Hua Shangmei and his brothers in apprenticeship came to Rui Bing, Wei Yuan would jump into action and disrupt the entire scene, which was driving these boys crazy yet they were incapable of doing anything in the situation. And Rui Bing's residence was enjoying better serenity than before.

The reality was, Wei Yuan identified Sister Bing surely being someone related to YC. Furthermore, those pretentious behavior of the boys were disgusting him. He feared Sister Bing losing something in the end, thus his disruption, joining the fun. It was partially out of his sense of protectiveness towards Sister Bing and the other half being the exaltation towards YC.

Thanks to Sister Bing, he managed to become the guest at the centermost table.

"Oh, Bing Bing, Ye... It's your Bing Bing..." Shang sounded like he was moaning.

That was peculiar to Ye Chong's ears, for he wondered what had made the artificial indulgence even more indulgent today, "Shang, according to the all the information I had been given at the moment, she does not seem to share any kind of relationship with me, but why do you keep saying that she's mine the whole time?"

"Hah!" Chuckled Shang, "Ye, you would not have understood. It's a woman after all, a deep study of life. She had already made her statement remember? She would marry no other man than you! Do you really think our Bing Bing would be telling a lie?"

"Our Bing Bing? Shang, your statement is contradicting!" reminded Ye Chong.

"Kek! Ye, aren't what yours ours as well?" rebutted Shang.

Ye Chong agreed, "If she is truly mine, then your statement would make sense." And he tried his very best to find the tape of that very moment of his life and replay it to see if he missed any-"But she does not seem to have mentioned something like marrying no other man than me. She only said she wanted me to marry her."

Oh the pride in Shang's laugh, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Ye, you seriously need to study more romance movies. Tsk, tsk, tsk, this is an effective rite of passage of humanity, the path to the colorful life.

Once you got to my place, heh! With my level, clearly you would understand what 'our Bing Bing' mean... Hehehehehe!"

"I see." Ye Chong could not comprehend a word Shang said as usual. Even though he was speaking English, it unavoidably gave him headache in the end. To retain his sanity, he chose to end the topic.

Since he had been sitting at the corner and Rui Bing never had the habit of looking around, absolutely not once she would notice that cold man. Surprisingly Wei Yuan had the habit, as he set his eyes upon everything around, they were so exciting! "I mean, look at those colorful mechs!" It was a shame for he only recognized mechs and not... humans.

Soon, the tournament commenced!

There were several sections in this tournament. It would begin with a group performance of trainees from Tianhua dojo, then the competition itself, followed by the exchange of the latest mech combats and lastly the explanation from the Master, being the drum-roll of the show.

The group performance was not impressive in the eyes of the experts. It was as if they were watching a bunch of dolls waving their limbs with the unnecessary heyhoos. The outsiders were enjoying every bit of the show however, it was lively and able to capture their interests on martial arts.

The first section was unquestionably successful, judging by the thrilled applause from the audience, with ear-piercing whistle and scream. The experts at the seat felt proud of the reaction as they straightened their back and set off an expression of their prime.

Ye Chong at the corner was enjoying his corner, not the show at all. He was in dead serious wonders on why it took forever for Lan Yixing to finish his tea. Shang in his head was laughing in an odd mechanical utterance. Sounds like a short-circuit or Shang was literally laughing blankly in his head he thought.

The competition part was the main event, the eye-catcher of them all. The participants were of great amount, considering how this would be the one-and-only golden opportunity for them to experience the kicks and punches pulled by the others. There were even a handful of fighters coming across the galaxies just to attend the tournament today.

The training room was renovated for the competition purposes and was furnished with a number of devices of advanced technology to allow the audience to view the field from all sorts of angles in clarity throughout the event. It seemed like Tianhua dojo had dumped in a large portion of their savings in this, with those holographic projectors of the latest models in all sizes scattered at every corner of the stage. Every spectator was also given a helmet at their seat to choose the match they desired via signal transmittance.

The tournament this time was also the pioneer to martial arts streaming on the Virtual World network, though there were only 3 channels, Hua Tiankai tried his best.

An exciting teaser of martial arts was played and everyone had their blood boiling.

The sharp chimes of the copper bells clouded the galaxy with a sense of the ancient, informing the crowd that the match commencing.

The seniority at the seat were nodding their heads in the dark, as fascinated by the capabilities of this master in producing the right atmosphere.

The panel of judges of the tournament this time consisted of the few celebs or true experts among the martial artists, and here Rui Bing was, sitting by the table, being the only female at the panel. One could tell the inferiority of females in the field.

That was none of Ye Chong's concern however, as his eyes fixed upon the matching participants. These participants were quite

peculiar, with drastically different age groups and color of their apparels. Their movements were the most peculiar in his eyes, with most of them being never-before-seen to him.

Ye Chong in his helmet was selecting the match he found interests in. He had to admit that the latest model was the latest after all, for it could capture the frames at the highest definition possible, expressing details at its finest.

Like that rather underweight man for instance, his movement was inspiring. His body moved like a spinning top in the air of a great velocity, which formed an reinforcing airflow on his kick, moving like a whip. Once he hit the opponent he would grab that inertia to turn the tide of his.

His opponent was a tall, bulky man, who backed off consecutively as hit by his kick.

Such movement was the eye-opener to Ye Chong, as he complimented in his thoughts to express his amazement. This was a prime example of employing all the strength throughout his body to fight the foe while utilizing inertias in brilliance to make motions and changes in his moves. He would then become unpredictable to the foes. Brilliant!

Of course, such move was hardly a threat to Ye Chong, as he could simply think of more than 10 methods to solve this puzzle. But that did not necessarily kill his admiration towards it.

There were too many matches going on simultaneously with dazzling techniques being never-before-seen. He eventually requested Shang to record everything at once and intended to check them out after the match ended.

Ye Chong was fully occupied to the match as he disregarded the flow of time. Out of sudden, a tap on his shoulder woke him.

Chapter 198: Brewing Storm XIII

"Follow me," Lan Yixing's voice rang before his ears.

Ye Chong removed his helmet hurriedly. The helmet was indeed a product of the advanced technology, such astonishing capability of dissociating the viewer's senses from the outside world.

Before both of them came to a realization, the tournament had already arrived at the final match of the day. Every final match of the day would be considered as the show of the day, where Tianhua dojo would arrange two ace martial artists fighting against each other, which one of them happened to be Lan Yixing for today.

For the sense of majesty, the match would be carried out at the enormous colosseum which was usually used for major mech combats. This colosseum also happened to be the grandest field of Tianhua dojo, which its length and width both happened to be 3km respectively and the field was bounded by the spectator area. That sounded dangerous indeed. To cope with the possibilities of how the parts of exploded mechs would be flying at the spectators, the whole battleground was capsuled inside a protective field. The colosseum was another huge investment by Hua Tiankai even way before mech combats became a thing in his field. People would truly compliment his prescience and daring decision.

The spectator area was empty however. Considering how the schedule was a pretty tight one for the day and how it would cost some time for the audience to shift themselves between venues, eventually everyone succumbed to viewing the match via the projector or the helmet, including those judges at the table. It was inevitable keeping in mind that the colosseum was pretty distant from their seat. Tianhua dojo had taken that into account, no worries. Hundreds of sets of cameras were installed at every corner inside the colosseum. The audience could just feel the match right on their seat. If this was not a grand setting, what would be?

Lan Yixing, with his boy Ye Chong had entered the preparation room. Every participant would do their stretching or warming up here. There was a long narrow corridor which would lead them to the field directly.

"I'm going," stated the master.

"Alright," replied Ye Chong nonchalantly.

Lan Yixing glanced at Ye Chong, "You are the most diligent among all the apprentices I had so far. You are here to witness what true martial arts is." The tone was indifferent as usual, but Ye Chong could discern the underlying passion. Lan Yixing was like a legendary dragon long sealed underground, and at that moment he would erupt and show them what tyranny truly was!

Ye Chong, in response, did not say a word. He only nodded his head, expressing curiosity towards the level of his master. He had yet seen his master in actual action other than teaching him a few tricks. His master had always been keeping everything under his sleeves.

"Ye." Shang spoke, "His opponent is one by the name of Zuo Ling." Zuo Ling? That's a new name. It was not surprising to see Ye Chong responding so, since he was a newbie in the field. He barely knew anything about the artists. His mind could go blank if he were asked to name a few martial artists. Mu had once searched for information on close-combats in Virtual World yet similarly he had hardly any knowledge. Shang? Nevermind.

Coincidentally, a trainee from Tianhua dojo came into the scene, "Master Lan," courteously he spoke, "You are the 77th seeded player in this match. According to the outcome of randomized matchup performed by our processor, your opponent would be the 1st seeded player, namely Zuo Ling."

"Zuo? That's his surname? Zuo Ling?" asked Lan Yixing. His soulless, dark eyes were suddenly lit by something as lustrous they grew. The wrinkles on his forehead twitched a little. Such detail

did not escape Ye Chong's eyes, as he wondered if Lan Yixing had something to do with Zuo Ling.

"Zuo family of Tian Luo?" The corners of his eyes twitched.

The trainee reacted in shock, "You knew the family too? I thought my brothers were pulling my legs when I heard it. So the family does exist? Are they really that great?"

"Yes," expressionlessly he replied.

"So they are truly great..." The trainee's face was filled with astonishment, "Well, you could prepare yourself at the moment. You may enter the field once prompted by the tune and announcement. Good luck." He left the room afterwards.

"Zuo family! It really is the Zuo family... is this what they called 'fate'?" Lan Yixing raised his head upon the ceiling, muttered, with a droplet of tear rolling from the eyes' corners. Ye Chong of course was astounded by the act.

He regained his calmness very soon after. He turned to Ye Chong, his eyes were grim. A moment lapsed and he finally spoke, "Go to my room, on the second drawer from your left, there would be a red microchip inside, which contains all techniques from the Lan family. You get it right after the match begins and leave Windstar the quickest as possible, the farthest as possible! Never be caught by the Zuo family. Never." His tone was flat, as if it had nothing to do with himself.

"He's making a will," reminded Shang, as he immediately deciphered the underlying meaning.

"Why?" Ye Chong agreed to Shang's judgement as he asked quickly.

"Merely because he's one of the Zuo family." The words came calmly. Ding! Dong! An electronic tune played, "Mr. Lan Yixing, Mr. Lan Yixing, No.77, please enter the field right away."

He turned away, headed to the corridor, "Make sure the Lan

family techniques remain till the end of time." And he disappeared at the glaring end of the corridor.

"This old guy probably has some issues with Zuo family. And the issues must be really, really bad." Mumbled Shang and he became excited out of sudden, "Ye, let's head back and grab the chip! Hehehehe, that's an excellent item you know what!"

"No," he disagreed as he shook his head. "We will go, after the match."

"Oh, fine. This is in fact a match between the real deals. Would be a waste if we just miss it."

"Shang..."

"Yes, Ye?"

"Could you control all the cameras in the dojo?"

"I could... but why? Do you have the need to do so?"

"Yes, just seize the control for now..."

The spacious ground glistened by the spotlight at every corner. The two participants stood face to face. That well-trained body of theirs suddenly felt so tiny on the field. The field was for mech combats after all, the spectator's area was a little far away from the field. If anyone were to watch the match at the seat, he or she would probably only see two dots jumping around. This was also why Hua Tiankai decided to use the eyes of the cameras instead, which gave a much better view.

Lan Yixing shot cold stares at the man before him. Zuo Ling was still he himself, with that apparel of his, exposing half of his chest, flashing that iron hard muscles along with that easy smile on his face. The female spectators were screaming in their helmets.

Compared to Zuo Ling the macho guy, Lan Yixing was just a normal middle-aged man one could see every dusk on the street.

"Zuo family from Tian Luo galaxy?" Initiated Lan Yixing.

"Yes," flinched slightly Zuo Ling, for the foe before him actually being able to identify his background at first glance. "And you are...?" He would not want to be reckless on this middle-aged man, in delay he asked.

"Hehe, Zuo family from Tian Luo galaxy, I had heard of names of your family. What a grand family back then." His laugh was more terrifying than crying, as his expressionless face being squeezed into something a monster would shriek upon.

Zuo Ling captured the meaning right away. This man before him must have had bad blood with his family before. He took a careful glance at the man yet his mind could not get him a name. He did remember the trainee informing him that his foe happened to be Mr. Lan... something Lan...

Wait, Lan? Astounded Zuo Ling, "You are the Lan family of September?"

"Such memory for the family who actually remembers a nobody like ours. Hehe, it took me forever to hide from the family yet here I am today, right in front of another Zuo. Fate is capricious indeed," Lan Yixing stared as he spoke word by word.

Zuo Ling's heart pumping hard, since he was very much knowledgeable of the history of his family. Of course he was informed about the case with Lan family. Back during the prime time of Zuo family, in motivation of expanding the forces of his family, the members started plundering upon the other families in the dark, including the Lan family of September, which their muscle control techniques were the killer moves on their list. Zuo family did attempt a variety of test in imitating the technique but the development turned out to be rather insignificant. In the end, they took action, a radical action.

The Lan family was not the grand kind of family one would expect from movies, although they held members of an amount of hundred. Wait... based on the records of our family, under the

magnificent plan of the operation, the family was plundered, members had been completely annihilated. There should not have survivors. Did my ancestors miss someone out? The operation was not a total success in fact, since the ultimate technique of the Lan family never came into their hands. They left the scene with a tiny clusters of microchips eventually. Nevertheless, those were more than enough for the family to make significant development in muscle control.

The irony was, when Zuo family expected the next era being theirs, the field of martial arts started degrading during the continuous raise of pilots in the galaxy, which lastly conquered the galaxy in absolution. The Zuos realized how the techniques were kept deep inside their zipped mouth. The techniques were locked up and never taught to the following generation. The microchips became the junk piling on the ground. Most of their own techniques had been lost from generation to generation. The family had broken down.

Zuo Ling could not really feel the tension from the record. He could feel the imperialism behind the plunder and conquer of his family however. He saw the need in it judging by the era in the past. The only confusing part was the man before him still had that hatred from generations before. Those plunder-and-conquer, bloodshed and murder were none other than historical incident to him, something already far and incomprehensible.

Well, no matter what, he was born under the Zuo family and he shouldered the honor of his family. Since he had come across a nemesis on such a formal occasion, alright then, he should be speaking with his strength, which he had great confidence of. The Lan family shall once again lose against the Zuo family, thought the man proudly.

Lan Yixing's face returned to its calmer state as he took off the shirt he had been wearing all day long. And that was the moment of silence where everyone shut their mouth, including the judge,

who were exchanging whispers vigorously at their table. Gasps were heard.

They simply did not expect Lan Yixing's physique to be such a view... Not the slightest sight of the normal bits of muscle was seen on his body. His body was connected with bundles of strands of tendons about the width of thumb. It looked like countless yellowish brown snakes slithering over his body at one glance. The shape of the bundles was clear and obviously strong, that no one would doubt the strength within.

Even Ye Chong dropped his jaws. It was the first time he saw such abnormal form of muscles on a living man. He got to admit, such an appearance could provide actual visual impact to humanity.

Zuo Ling on the other hand lost the color of his face. Among every witness to such anomaly, he was probably the only one who recognized the threat those bundles could pull off. Most importantly, the muscles presented the man's identity being the Jie expert, one who stood on top of his own field, the Jie expert of the Lan family... such appearance. Zuo Ling suffered the loss of confidence this drastically the first time.

Lan Yixing stood there. His expression stayed still. He had hidden his capabilities for long enough and today would be the day where he would disregard everything else and solve this resentment once and for all.

Both of them got into position. Not a single word was spoken.

The copper bell chimed long and gracefully. That clear sound resounded at the spacious field.

Almost simultaneously, both of them acted like two strikes of lightning as they crashed into each other. Wham! One thunderous roar, both of them switched positions right away, as if they had read moves of each other.

Both of their moves went so rapid that the audience could not capture the frames with their eyes. Gasps were even heard from the panel.

Ye Chong right at the side of the field had witnessed everything clearly. Both of them had exchanged fists and kicks 22 times upon contact. As they went so fast, audience could only capture that one wham, which in actuality was a heavy stack of 22 whams.

Zuo Ling was put into such disadvantage on the first match. One could tell that from that shaking left arm of his. With that master control of Lan Yixing over his own muscles, a crash would be the best way to begin the match, even Ye Chong could know a few methods to magnify the strength in seconds by times. Utilizing the knowledge with that bundles of alien flesh of his, Ye Chong would also be in slight fear.

Zuo Ling did not panic however. His expression was calmer than water as he lifted his right arm and formed a blade. His left arm rested behind his back, his leg slightly crossed... yes, it was a strange posture indeed.

Lan Yixing treated the action with nonchalance as the muscles on his shoulders wriggled disturbingly. Underneath the tight pants of his, the muscles were expanding. The audience could see the frightening strength in the muscles. Lan Yixing looked as if he had redistributed muscles of his entire body over the limbs. That lost in proportion was bizarre to Ye Chong as he turned deaf over Shang's commentary.

A true fearsome manipulation over muscles! Fiasco brewed at the seats right when such a groundbreaking phenomenon happened, which science was disobeyed, burnt and tossed away.

The fighters on their seat were holding their breath in tension, as they anticipated the next move.

Chapter 199: Brewing Storm XIV

"Jie expert!" a shriek escaped from one of the handsome fighters at the seat, shattering the dead silent of the spectator area.

Jie expert, the advanced form of the one in combats, possesses a kind of unique ability, like that attack from Rui Bing on Ye Chong back then, where he could feel being constricted by something. That was none other than a type of pressure exerted on his mentality, his body was as sound as one could imagine.

Jie experts were uncommon. And according to records, their abilities were even more uncommon, bizarre one could comment as.

Jie expert? Jie expert! They really exist! Every fighter on the ground stood up. Ever since the fall of their era, Jie expert had become the myth of their field. One mere fighter from a mere dojo could never have a chance to see a Jie expert in his or her entire life, although most likely they were just unaware of their existence. The population of Jie experts was far more motivating than they imagined. It was not surprising since this was an era where pilots flew in flocks on their mechs at the sky. The number had grown scarce, especially when their martial art techniques could be put hardly in other purposes than fighting itself. In the end martial arts practitioners would only be the bodyguards of some public figures. Moreover, these experts were isolated by nature, they would hide their abilities from people. So folks like spectators there might spend their entire life of not seeing the true practitioner like the Jie expert.

A battle between the Jie experts was already not something common one could see even during the prime time of martial artists. Such occasion on the stage currently was something once a hundred years probably.

The right palm of Zuo Ling transformed into a peculiar dark

green which began spreading to his arms at a discernible rate.

Lan Yixing lowered his legs, squatted slightly, with his eyes on Zuo Ling.

He screamed! The air vibrated in waves, rolling over the surrounding. The definition of the cameras was great enough to capture the details of the waves.

The practitioners in their helmet were breathing in fear for one scream from a Jie expert could be this earth shattering.

The folks on the spectator's area was stupefied as if they were viewing an action film made out of CGI.

Ye Chong's pupils shrunk drastically, as his eyes could discern that wriggling movement of Lan Yixing's muscles on his thigh even underneath the tightened pants.

Lan Yixing's legs charged up.

WIt's too fast! It was astonishing even for a running man like Ye Chong as he realized with his speed he could at most touch the afterimages of Lan Yixing.

Lan Yixing launched himself like a cannonball and came before Zuo Ling in split seconds. That dark greenness of his palm had only grown over his elbow.

One violent punch! No technique, merely strength and velocity, coming from Lan Yixing under that enlarged arm of his wobbling vigorously. Ye Chong wondered if he could even take that punch in whole piece.

Zuo Ling clearly did not reckon such velocity from a middle aged man like Lan Yixing.

In panic his right palm slashed nothing as his body backed off swiftly.

Clink! A sound of hitting the metal resounded in the place, in the heart of the people.

Zuo Ling clumsily backed off. His face completely drained. That punch did not land with no harm. Ye Chong was in disbelief however, as that very punch Lan Yixing had pulled, judging by its impulsive force, could shatter even a door of titanium, let alone a fleshy arm. But... But Zuo Ling's right arm was still intact. Ye Chong raised his brows.

Lan Yixing did not perform his next move immediately as he stood still before Zuo Ling, staring at that greenish right arm of his, "So this is one of the techniques your family has developed from Lan family's muscle control I supposed. Such a shame that your family had never obtained the complete text, what they have speculated was a total mess."

His voice trailed off as he jumped forward, although he did not reuse that peculiar technique of his just now. Ye Chong supposed that technique to be rather consuming to Lan Yixing.

Well, the master was in fact a master, afterall. He did a few normal moves, of masterly execution. Every move was performed flawlessly on spot, with that muscles of his waving in minuscule scope. Producing an explosive strength even on the micro level, it wowed Ye Chong.

Zuo Ling only regained his consciousness by then. He wielded that eerie looking arm of his glowing in dark green, the left arm at his back to be ready for any cheating move coming from the back. His style was as hard as Lan Yixing, as his knuckle was launched. The exchange of fists and kicks started once more, a satisfying sight to the practitioners on their seat. Those advanced practitioners however were in worry as the competition had become a competition of blood in their eyes. They feared the match would not end till one of them had their blood spilling on the ground and collapsed. If there was casualty right on the first day of the tournament, the tournament would be impacted negatively.

Hua Tiankai got up from his seat first off. Being the host of the

tournament this time, he shall never allow casualty to happen. He walked to Rui Bing, who felt his movement from the back as she sprang up from her seat upon realizing it was her uncle.

"Bing my girl, they are going to hurt themselves if this goes on. I want them to stop the match right now, but I think they would not be convinced so easily, so I would like you to give this uncle of yours a little help," stated Hua Tiankai.

"Okay," she nodded her head.

"Hey, Sister Bing..." Wei Yuan snuggled upon her at the side, "Tag me along." Of course he would not miss the opportunity to watch the martial arts exchange in closeup, especially when he could watch his runner-up idol, Sister Bing (of course the first would be always YC) in action. He would kill just to get there.

The field had transformed into something else right at the moment.

Lan Yixing's knuckles had the velocity increased strenuously, that it felt like a carbon copy of his ultimate before, only it behaved more partially and abruptly in silence.

The afterimages, in Ye Chong's eyes, had reappeared. He anticipated the acceleration this time. As he was watching the match from a unique angle, he could clearly discern the fists of Lan Yixing, which the bundles of muscles squirmed like a group of snakes on his shoulder, all towards his arm. They squirmed so quickly that it felt like speed of lightning compared to the obvious charging-up action Lan Yixing performed before.

The fist directly hit on Zuo Ling's chest as he failed to dodge. Crack. Ye Chong could hear the bones breaking.

The applause at the spectator's area had transfigured into uncontrollable shrieks of fear. Right when they assumed Zuo Ling to be a gone case of the match, that left arm hidden behind his back finally came into action. That hammer-fist Lan Yixing landed

on his chest, his eyes lustered as his chest softened dramatically like bog. Lan Yixing was confused by that sensation, it was as if he was smashing on a knead of dough.

Lan Yixing's punch was still mightier, even if Zuo Ling had relaxed his muscles significantly. He whimpered in pain as he held his left arm wrapped upon Lan Yixing's right hand like a strap of vines.

Such reflexivity. He broke the laws of anatomy and had somehow transformed into a mollusk.

The green color on his face flashed as his left arm of constriction also turned as dark green as the right arm. Snap! The right hand of Lan Yixing had been distorted. Ye Chong who knew something about the human anatomy could tell, the bones underneath the bundles of his muscle had been splintered.

Lan Yixing whimpered as his left hand launched upon Zuo Ling's throat.

Zuo Ling also performed the same trick this old fox used. Wham, both of their palms struck together. Their bodies backed off in whimpers. Zuo Ling's left arm which constricted Lan Yixing had literally impaired his right arm. They were close.

And then, they demonstrated a classic example of close-combats with bare hands, except it was bare hand, rather than bare hands.

"Hah! What's up with Lan family? What's up with the technique being a mess? The Zuos aren't something you pesky little family could comprehend!" Zuo Ling's hands moved rapidly as he teased in pride, although he did in fact have that price to flaunt. Jie experts were scarce by nature and for one Jie expert of his age while possessing more than one ability, he was probably the only one. As Lan Yixing had mentioned before, that hardening technique performed by Zuo Ling was in fact a technique coming from the Lan family's microchips his ancestor has plundered. It was a definition of their deduction over the information they

snatched. And the head of the Zuos was well-aware of the issue behind the technique. So the head eventually invented a softening technique as a counter to cover up the holes. Zuo Ling was undoubtedly the genius of it for he blended both the abilities in one.

The combination of muscular hardness and tenderness was the killer move for him. But he was still too young for he lacked understanding on the overall process of combats, as well as his control over it. He was incompetent to an experienced fighter like Lan Yixing who had spent the past decades on muscle controls, which led to such situation where both of them were wounded by each other in the end.

Well, technically, Lan Yixing had a worse injury. Zuo Ling was unharmed other than that fractured his rib while maintaining the upper hand in the match. Lan Yixing... technically had lost his right arm, which harshly halved his forces. And his right arm was still under the constriction by the foe. Bone-piercing pain could be felt even at the slightest movement he made, which caused him unable to formulate any kind of moves effectively.

The words from Zuo Ling were painful to his ears as they struck to the depth of his heart. His eyes clouded by wrath out of sudden. He was not a talker to begin with so he responded with silence, however his eyes had convinced Zuo Ling that he would not stay on the upper hand for long.

Ye Chong also captured that expression in his eyes, "Shang!" Screamed Ye Chong frantically in his head.

His body shrouded away like an arrow launched from the bow, all the way towards Lan Yixing and Zuo Ling. Shang who had been his most impeccable partner the whole time had interrupted every transmission of signal at the place.

"Let's go!" Rui Bing shouted as he grabbed Wei Yuan in her hands and ran all the way down the field with Huan Tiankai who also

reacted promptly behind.

It was almost when Rui Bing and Hua tiankai made their moves, the signal was cut off and the screen on every projector, every helmet went blank. The spectators at the intensity went silent. The staff who were in charge of the streaming on the Virtual world confusingly noticed their screen being blank as well.

It took a few seconds for those practitioners to react on the happening as one of them somehow shouted, "We are going there to watch!" And people started rumbling off their seats and ran all the way to the field.

A strange kind of feeling reverberated in Ye Chong for some reason.

Chapter 200: Brewing Storm XV

Ye Chong's speed was amazing. He moved like a column of smoke. If anyone was there to witness such happening, one would be dropping the jaws on spot. "Is this the speed of a human at the greatest?" They would wonder.

Lan Yixing howled once, deep agony he was in, with a hint of feeling released.

The mist of blood clouded both men, with the sound of strings breaking rang within. No one could tell what had occurred inside, as they heard the whimpers coming from both of them simultaneously.

The fire in Ye Chong was extinguished. He retrieved his calmness in battle, where he felt like he had jumped off an erupting volcano right into the freezing lava, his eyes were tainted by the true desire to kill.

His velocity lifted countless afterimages, the tips of his toes exerted forces nonstop as he accelerated. His godliness speed was none of his business, as his eyes were all onto that cloud of blood at the center of the field.

Shush! A man flew out of the mist.

Ye Chong recognized that man at first glance. It was actually Lan Yixing, who no longer had that vitality before. His body was fully covered in blood. The bundles on his body were nearly all torn as they hung over his body, with blood dripping off the endings of those torn bundles to the ground.

Standing at the tip of his toes, Ye Chong readjusted the direction and grabbed Lan Yixing, whose eyes were dull and lifeless. The respiration and heartbeat ceased permanently.

Ye Chong took a drastic brake and put down Lan Yixing gently. In silence he stood.

The other man had rushed out of the mist and obviously it was Zuo Ling. Without hesitation, Ye Chong made his move.

Ye Chong never had the habits of explaining or talking big about his motive of pulling his punches. Getting into a fight suddenly was the bread and butter of his life. Zuo Ling might have appeared to be in a fluster, with most of his strength lost and being unable to hurt Ye Chong a little, Ye Chong still did not intend to forsake that good habit of his.

The last blow delivered by Lan Yixing was effective as ever. The bleeding pores over Zuo Ling body were of thumb sizes, 7 to 8 of them, which dyed Zuo Ling in flowing crimson. It could be Lan Yixing's blood though.

Without a sound, Ye Chong shifted before Zuo Ling, his right hand stung upon Zuo Ling's throat like a serpent.

Zuo Ling simply did not expect to be raided by some outsiders at such a nick of time. All he could do was to lift his head and go backwards while firing his hands, striving to hold that blow from Ye Chong.

Wham! That actual pressure in his hand! Zuo Ling was overjoyed as he caught it! He thought he had made that necessary move to turn the tide. Something was turned indeed, but not the tide. Crack! Crack crack crack crack! The force was exerted onto his arm. The sound of bones-cracking echoed in his ears and before he realized, an overwhelming pain seized his body.

Did that old fox Lan return? I could not name any other person who could wield such strength...

That was his last thought before he fainted.

"Stop it!" A profound voice of a man roared throughout the place.

Ye Chong did not plan to stop it. There would be no better chance for him to slaughter this weakened tiger. Literally any tiger that lost its fangs might as well be dead! His right hand sped up, lifted

countless copies of itself, all onto the throat of Zuo Ling.

Ye Chong's inhuman speed was once again demonstrated in front of people.

Without further ado, the throat of Zuo Ling obediently lied within his hands. A little bit of force on the neck. Crack. The bones shattered. The fainted man had become the fainted corpse. Ye Chong made a shake on his hand. Zuo Ling was lobbed in a fine curve and landed next to Lan Yixing.

In one day, two Jie experts had deceased right here.

Ye Chong turned to the running crowd towards him. His eyes were cold.

Rui Bing's head exploded. Her steps withdrew abruptly, as she looked at that face countless times she had dreamed of... the same exact cold indifference remained with the same lonesomeness.

Rui Bing was ahead of the crowd but as soon as she held her steps, the crowds passed her by, where a majority of the practitioners turned their heads back, wondering why the judge had stopped moving out of the blue.

"Sister? Sister! Sister Bing!" Wei Yuan panicked, as he saw his Sister Bing acting all weird.

Rui Bing appeared as if bewitched by something, as his words never reached her, her eyes fixed upon Ye Chong.

The shout was from Hua Tiankai, the only person with the same position as Rui Bing. He shouted as soon as he saw Ye Chong, who was going to murder Zuo Ling. His voice failed to stop the tragedy from happening however. And he stumbled upon the speed of Ye Chong's hands.

Horrifying... This is too much. Is he also a Jie expert? Wondered the master, as also a Jie expert himself. He did not have that frightening speed, but he was not convinced at the fact that a man could achieve such speed merely by his body. Truth was cruel

however, as it smashed whatever he knew, convincing him that it was not a dream.

Zuo Ling's fate had been set. Not even his scream could change a thing. He could tell that Zuo Ling was dead obviously, he was not even confident enough to survive under that kind of blow.

The fear was not felt for a long time since years back. And that fear was brought to him by none other than this young man standing right before him.

This young man, he is fatality itself! Commented Hua Tiankai right away! And what disturbed him more was the indifference on his face despite what he had done. Hua Tiankai was not the person who had not seen enough of the darkness yet that indifference of the young man was not something he had ever seen on those brutal murderers.

But, would I be backing off and let the boy do what he want? Casualty during a match could be negative but it was not that bad for one's reputation in the field, but murder committed by a total outsider, and was performed in the dark, that was an absolute shame rubbed right on his face.

Still! He could not do a thing to the boy at the front!

Hua Tiankai remembered the face of this boy. He seemed to be the youngest under Lan Yixing's apprenticeship. I think Shangmei had told me once that this boy was just a part timer... A part timer? Don't be silly! Tell me which part timer could wield such strength? Judging from merely those moves this "part-timer" had performed, he was sure that the boy was not much weaker than his own master Lan Yixing. Or this so-called part-timer was an apprentice raised by Lan Yixing all this while in dark? That makes sense!

The practitioners took a cold breath the moment they witnessed Ye Chong's moves when they arrived. Amazement was there, as they wondered if the person was a human.

Hua Tiankai did not wish to gamble with his move. If he were to make a talking-to at this moment, he could not guarantee that it would work. Losing reputation was something minor when one were to face such a killing machine. Keeping oneself alive would be the priority...

Ye Chong's strength was imprinted in everyone.

Practically, he sort of over-imagined it. Ye Chong was powerful, Ye Chong seemed powerful but if they were to have a duel, the outcome would not be as predictable as one could assume. Ye Chong's body was excellent, yet he lacked the skills, although the strike was so brilliant that people were immediately convinced by his inhuman speed of his hands.

Hua Tiankai could not help but to look for Rui Bing among the people. He planned to have a joint attack with Rui Bing, well the boy could be really great but under an actual aid, he should not be able to escape the dojo.

And there Rui Bing was, who stood at the crowd with a strange expression, after Lan Yixing took the effort to look hard. Hua Tiankai could tell from her expression, that she was too distracted to even hurt a fly. What happened to Bing? Hua Tiankai cracked his head to find no explanation for this. A Jie expert was usually unshakable at his or her will, unless a strong force was put onto. Very well, Bing must have been shocked by that monster. Relating to the fear he received before, Lan Yixing got a sound explanation for the phenomenon.

That did not solve his problem though. Providing that he could not even guarantee the safety of the participants outside the match, the tournament would never continue.

The chains of thoughts looked long-winded in text, but it was just a lightning connection in Hua Tiankai's head.

Wait, his eyes went wide. He found a solution as he took out the communicator and whispered.

He glanced at the crowd, standing at the dead silent colosseum, where Ye Chong was leaving from soon. Ye Chong had completely lost interests on martial arts.

He took a look at Lan Yixing already lying on the ground dead. Although he did not assume taking out Zuo Ling as part of his responsibility, he did it anyway. The two Jie experts crashed the worlds of each other, depicting their strong characters and now they died, soundlessly they slept together.

"Ye! Stop daydreaming! A mech is heading towards here!" Shang suddenly boomed.

Ye Chong got down from the castle in the air as his thoughts ran rapidly, formulating a plan. Even if he left right away, he would not make it before the mech arrived. So almost immediately after, he called Han Jia out.

Han Jia landed before him, like the god from heaven as solemnly it stood before him.

Wait, a mech? The practitioners were confused by the scene, since a mech was like something from the alternate dimension to those who wielded fists and kicks as tradition.

"Ah!"

"Ahhh!"

Both Rui Bing and Wei Yuan screamed.

"YC!" Wei Yuan jumped, "He's actually YC!"

The plot twist shocked Rui Bing awake and she instantly understood the entire situation. Worry grew in her over the emergence of YC. That mech of Ye Chong was familiar to her eyes, not till Wei Yuan's scream she could never remember that it was the mech who tossed Wei Yuan to her.

So that was him!

Rui Bing's heart shuddered.

He remembers me! He still remembers me!! Joy overflowed deepest inside her heart.

In the midst of gasp and glare, Ye Chong climbed into the cabin of Han Jia like a mutated ape, which was again amazing to the spectators. Wei Yuan's eyes were lustrous. YC it is! Even the way he got onto the cabin was different than the others!

Is he running away? Hua Tiankai panicked, as he knew, if he was given 10 more, no, probably 8 more seconds, his eldest apprentice, Zheng Zhongxing would come with his mech zooming! That was the masterplan he had.

A practitioner could be great but not great as the metals. No way the boy would win as he stood against the mighty mech. So that was his plot, of taking a mech to smack upon the boy, although the stinky irony was, as a practitioner himself, he eventually relied on a mech, a machine to do the fighting for him. It was painful to his heart... well, maybe... it was the time for martial arts to fade out of history.

He was confident over the plan however. Zheng Zhongxing might be the weakest fighter among his apprentices, but he was one pilot with an advanced title before he came to join the dojo. The mech combats of Tianhua dojo would never develop if without his assistance.

His heart ran cold the moment he spotted that mech the boy summoned, fearing that the boy would truly run away with the mech. It would be too late by then.

Right when Ye Chong got onto Han Jia, a mech zoomed to the colosseum.

And that was when Ye Chong, to his astonishment, found out the mech being a similar close-ranged models like his Han Jia.

It is clearly a modified mech. The body should be of Judgement: Peace, well Peace was a rarely used model among the others in the

Judgement series. Engines... Ye Chong could not tell so he could not make a comment, although he speculated them being the Hurricane series. A bright red main body of the mech, adorned by silvery stripes, eye-catching it was.

A shield with the shape of a burning flame, where the tips were glowing of cold sharpness. The arms, elbows and the knees of the mech were distinctly strengthened in terms of thickness. The thorns on the joints of the fingers were of mere darkness. Ye Chong did not show disdain over them as he too favored these tiny accessories to be added on his own mech, since these accessories would come in handy in all sorts of situations naturally.

The parts of the mech were premium in any sense.

But... strangely it was not armed in any ways. Ye Chong could not see any weapon there.

A close-combat model? Ye Chong wondered. Well, close-combat among mechs was a thing on the Virtual World as loved by numerous fans, but nobody really tried it in reality. That was the first close-combat model Ye Chong saw outside the virtual reality.

The mech took a perfect brake and stopped 300 meters away from Han Jia. Ye Chong could affirm to his speculation since a distance of 300 meters would be too close for a ranged model while being absolutely sound for a close-combat model to launch a blow.

Ye Chong's expression was firm. There was no ripple on his water.

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